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ALBERT LAY J. STONE. FROM A SKETCH BY COUNT D'ORSAY

REMINISCENCES OF THE OPERA.

BY

BENJAMIN LUMLEY,

TWENTY YEARS DIRECTOR OF HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE.

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TO HER

WHO THROUGH LIFE HAS UNITED A CULTIVATED TASTE IN ART

WITH A KINDLY SYMPATHY FOR ITS MINISTERS:

TO

MRS. GROTE,

AS A MARK OF MY RESPECTFUL ADMIRATION AND REGARD

FOR ONE

IN WHOM INTELLECTUAL POWER

IS TEMPERED BY WOMANLY GRACE AND GENTLENESS,

THIS VOLUME

IS BY PERMISSION INSCRIBED.

INTRODUCTION.

In offering to the public a record of the administration, vicissitudes, splendours, and, I regret to add, decline, of the establishment known as "Her Majesty's Theatre," I cannot be said to be travelling over familiar ground. For it is worthy of remark that, while many bygone periods of theatrical history have found their chroniclers, their panegyrists, their enthusiastic remembrancers, the space filled by the events of the opera-stage from 1836 to 1858, has remained without a comprehensive survey, without a careful retrospect of its many notable and brilliant illustrations.

To supply this void, to endeavour at once to preserve the memories of past grandeurs (already fading with the generation who witnessed and enjoyed them), and to furnish to the younger portion of the British public some conception of what opera *has* been, in its truly "palmy days," I have employed my leisure in putting together this history of my twenty years' connection with, perhaps, the noblest lyrical theatre of Europe.

The changes which have overspread modern society, vast and manifold as they are admitted to be, are perhaps nowhere more perceptible than in the region known

as the Operatic world. To one who has formed a link in that chain which formerly connected the higher ranks of society with the taste for Lyrical art—with the cultivation of the beautiful and imaginative in both music and the divine art of dancing, as once practised and admired —to such a one, the contemplation of the altered relations now subsisting between the patrons of the Opera and the ministers of Art, suggests many painful comparisons. The Opera House —once the resort and the "rendezvous" of the *élite* of rank and fashion, where applause received its direction from a body of cultivated, discriminating "cognoscenti," and the treasury of which was furnished beforehand by ample subscriptions in reliance upon the provision to be made by the manager— now mainly depends for support upon miscellaneous and fluctuating audiences; audiences composed in great part of persons who, in hurried moments of visits to the metropolis, attend the opera as a kind of quasi-duty, in order to keep pace with the musical chit-chat of the day.

The Opera, then, once among the prominent features of London life with the nobility, no longer fills the same important space in the circle of "the season's" enjoyments. Boxes, which of yore were lent to friends if not occupied by the possessor, are now, it is well known, sold for the evening to any stranger who wishes to attend a performance. So that, as a sociable resort of a class whose members incline to somewhat exclusive habits among themselves, the Opera has ceased to offer those agreeable facilities for semi-public, semi-private intercourse, once so valued by our aristocracy.

Again, the increased numbers of those who compose the wealthy residents of London, occasion infinitely more entertainments to be given in private than formerly; whilst the countless attractions now offered during daylight hours multiply upon the votaries of fashion, to an extent which leaves less and less appetite for pursuits connected with Art. Déjeûners, flower-shows, exhibitions of all kinds, reviews, afternoon "receptions," and the like, occupy young and old; and, finally, the late dinner consumes the space during which the two first acts of the opera ought to be going on.

But amid the various causes which, I regret to think, contribute to the lessened importance of the Opera in general estimation, none, taken singly, is more deeply seated than the fact of there being no new first-rate composer in Europe. The dearth of good singers, again, recognised as it must be by all, operates scarcely less heavily upon the theatre. Perhaps even the finest operas of modern date, such as the "Huguenots" and "Le Prophète," are dependent for their attraction upon singers of commanding talent. And these become more and more rare, alas! The orchestra, having been augmented in proportion as vocal talent has waned, now constitutes the leading feature, especially at Covent Garden, where its masses of sound serve but to cover the deficiencies of artists whose voices it should assist and support.

Not to enlarge further upon circumstances influencing the decline of Opera in England in these days, I will conclude by observing that, although "my Sun *has* set" as a director, the following pages may serve to connect my humble name with a series of performances,

in both Lyric and Choregraphic Art, such as may challenge the glories of any period of the past. And since it was my good fortune to be able to bring forward in succession so much genius and talent as to excite enthusiasm, and kindle the deepest sympathy in the breasts of my countrymen and countrywomen, during many memorable passages, so it may be permitted to me to recall, with feelings of just pride, those prosperous days to their memory; trusting that the services of the Director, whose strenuous endeavours to maintain the theatre in honourable pre-eminence consumed the best years of his life, will be borne in mind by those who enjoyed the fruits of those endeavours, be they artist, amateur, patron, critic, citizen, or tradesman.

B. L.

London, June, 1864.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

Interest Attached to Her Majesty's Theatre—Difficulties Attending the Management of Italian Opera in London—Difficulties Arising from the Legal Condition of the Property—History of Legal Complications—M. Laporte as Manager of Her Majesty's Theatre—My First Connexion with this Gentleman—Character of M. Laporte—Anecdotes—The Artist's Cabal and its Hindrances—Severini, Malibran, and Grisi 1

CHAPTER II.

Commencement of Cabal on the Part of the Principal Singers—Unsuccessful Attempt to Defeat this by M. Laporte—The "Tamburini Row"—Importance Attached to the Ballet—Difficulty of Obtaining Good Ballets—Legal Embarrassments Arising out of Mr. Chambers' Insolvency—Negotiations for Purchase of Theatre—M. Laporte's Absence in France—His Sudden Death—I am left Executor—My Hasty Return to England 12

CHAPTER III.

Qualities needed for Governing an Establishment like that of the Opera—Contrast between these and the Character of the late Lessee—The Theatres in England Unassisted by Government—Serious Nature of the Enterprise as Dependent on Individual Resources—Reflections

on my Peculiar Position—Advantageous Experience acquired in M. Laporte's time—Favour shown by the Nobility and others on my entering upon the Direction of Her Majesty's Theatre—The Fêtes at my Villa on the Thames—Their Attraction 23

CHAPTER IV.

Commencement of the Season of 1842—Subscription Large and Liberally Entered into by Patrons and Booksellers—Engagements Inherited from M. Laporte Renewed—Inability of Madame Grisi to Fulfil Hers—Rapid Journey to Italy in Search of a Prima Donna—Madame Frezzolini Engaged—Embarrassing Relations with the Artists, Consequent on the Former Laxity of M. Laporte's Government—Strong Company Announced for First Season—The Pre-Paschal Season—"Gemma di Vergy"—Guasco—Moltini—Negociation with Donizetti and Romani for a New Opera 32

CHAPTER V.

Season of 1842 (Continued)—The Ballet—"Giselle"—Carlotta Grisi—Persiani—Ronconi's *Début*—Madame Moltini in "Norma"—Mario's Refusal to play *Pollione*—*Début* of Madame Frezzolini—Poggi—"Beatrice di Tenda"—"Lucrezia Borgia"—"Torquato Tasso"—Failure of Madame Ronconi—Dissensions among the Artists—Success of "Le Cantatrici Villane" 38

CHAPTER VI.

Season of 1842 (Continued)—Visit of the Queen to the Opera after the Attempt upon her Life—Enthusiasm displayed by Audience—Grandeur of the real "Spectacle"—Second Engagement of Mademoiselle Rachel at Her Majesty's Theatre—Her Success in "Les Horaces"—American Anecdote—Reappearance of Rubini—Undiminished Popularity of this Singer—The "Stabat Mater" of Rossini given, with great power, at Her Majesty's Theatre—Ballet of "Alma," with Signor Costa's Music, Successful—Illness of Madame Persiani—Dissatisfaction of the Audience at the Change of Performance—Tumultuous Uproar—The Opera not allowed to Proceed—The Ballet alone given—Efforts of the Manager to Ensure the Performance of the Operas announced—Farewell of Rubini—Close of the Season of 1842 48

CHAPTER VII.

Auspicious Dawn of the Season of 1843—The Discordant Elements within the Walls Calmed Down through the Agency of Lablache—Strength of the Company—The Ballet—Splendour of its Composition—Rentrée of Fanny Ellsler—Dissatisfaction of the Vocalists at the Prominence given to the Ballet—Its Distant Consequences Adverted to—The "House" Newly Decorated for the Season of 1843—Opening of the Season in March—"Fops' Alley"—Its Ancient Character Described—Success of Adèle Dumilâtre—Début of Fornasari—His Success in the "Belisario" of Donizetti—Rentrée of Madame Grisi and Mario after Easter—"Semiramide"—Brambilla—Production of "Linda di Chamouni" and "Don Pasquale" . . . 58

CHAPTER VIII.

Season of 1843 (Continued)—The Ballet—Its Remarkable Brilliancy with Cerito, F. Ellsler, Dumilâtre, Perrot—"State Visit" of Her Majesty to the Opera in July—The "Pas de Deux" a Great Feature of the Evening—Rivalry of the Two Danseuses—First Appearance of Camillo Sivori, the Violinist, in England—His Triumphant Success—Lola Montez—Her Pretensions to the Rank of a "First Subject"—Exposure of their Fallacy—Lola Withdrawn from the Boards of the Opera by Myself on Conscientious Grounds—Exigent Demands upon the Administration of the Theatre by Persons of Rank and Influence, as well as by Artists—Satisfaction Generally Felt with the Performances throughout the Season of 1843 74

CHAPTER IX.

Season of 1844—Continued Prosperity—Countess of Cannazaro's Cook—Difficulty with Fornasari—Corelli—"Esmeralda"—"Zampa"—Failure of Felice—Mademoiselle Favanti—Decline of Fornasari's Popularity—Costa's *Don Carlos*—Ricci's *Corrado d'Altamura*—Strength of the Ballet—Equivocal Success of Moriani—Visit of the Emperor Nicholas—The Salvi Row—St. Léon and the Private Box—Musical Tact of Diplomatists—Sound and Colour 80

CHAPTER X.

Prospects of 1845—The Singers provided of a high class—Dancers equally eminent—Theatre opens with "Ernani"—Doubtful appreciation of Verdi's Music in England—His claims to approval set forth—Difficulty of engrafting a new style upon English taste—Examples—Début of Lucille Grahn—First appearance of Madame Castellan—The "Viennoises"—History of their engagement—Obstacles thrown in the way by the Austrian Government—Real grounds of objection disclosed—The Ballet in high favour—Taglioni once more appears in "La Sylphide"—The "Pas de Quatre" devised—Dilemma, arising from unwillingness to commence on the part of each Danseuse—How solved by Director—Fame of the Pas de Quatre 101

CHAPTER XI.

Season of 1845 (Continued)—Barroilhet and Rossi Caccia—"Roberto Devereux"—Dissensions with Grisi and Mario—The box grievances—Survey of affairs—Vexatious attacks on the Management by individual Complainants—Financial prosperity—I purchase the lease of Her Majesty's Theatre—Testimonial offered by the Artists on that occasion 119

CHAPTER XII.

Season of 1846—The Theatre embellished anew—Germs of disagreement between the Direction and Signor Costa—Retirement of the latter from his post in the Orchestra—Grounds of the rupture between him and the Director—Mr. Balfe appointed in place of Signor Costa—Rumours relative to the rise of a Rival Establishment—Symptoms of secession on the part of *La Vieille Garde*—Lablache holds fast by "Her Majesty's"—Efforts made to bring back Rubini—Verdi's Music advances in Popular Estimation—He undertakes to compose an opera for Her Majesty's Theatre, but fails on account of ill-health—"Nabucco," its success—Remarks on the injurious effect of alterations in the Story—The old Répertoire resumed, with the leading Artists, after Easter, with the addition of "I Lombardi" of Verdi—Furious opposition waged against Verdi—The *libretto* bad—The Ballet of "Lalla Rookh," splendid decorations bestowed upon it—Arrival of Taglioni—"La Gitana"—"Pas des Déesses"—Review of the Season, ending with a "Row" at the Theatre—Early negotiations with Jenny Lind 132

CHAPTER XIII.

Autumn of 1846—Rise of the rival opera at Covent Garden—Secession of the leading Artists from the "Old House"—Difficulties of organising a new Company—The Orchestra broken up in part by the change of Conductor—Engagement of Mademoiselle Jenny Lind as *prima donna* at Her Majesty's Theatre—Expectations afloat relative to a new Opera by Dr. Felix Mendelssohn—Obstacles to the appearance of Jenny Lind—Season of 1847—Contract with Mr. Bunn—Objections raised by the Authorities to the production of the Opera of "Robert le Diable"—How surmounted—The opening night—Gardoni—Rosati in a new Ballet 156

CHAPTER XIV.

Season of 1847 (Continued)—Performance on behalf of distressed Irish—Nino—Coletti—Fraschini's *début* in "Lucia di Lammermoor"—Doubts concerning the arrival of Jenny Lind—Measures adopted by the Director to overcome her hesitation—His journey to Vienna—Opening of the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden—Lucille Grahn—Prevalence of sickness among the Artists; influenza—Certain Advent of Jenny Lind announced—Her arrival in England—Her first appearance as *Alice* in "Robert le Diable"—Warm reception given to her—Unbounded applause at close of Performance 175

CHAPTER XV.

Season of 1847 (Continued)—Successful course of the Establishment, aided by the Popularity of the Swedish Nightingale—A new opera by Verdi—Not generally approved by the Public—Resumption of the old "Repértoire"—Unprecedented enthusiasm excited by Jenny Lind's performance—The Ballet—Well sustained by first-rate Artists—Departure of Jenny Lind—Regret of the Public—Trial of Bunn *v.* Lind adjourned—Doubtful success of Covent Garden Season—Cordial support afforded to the Manager—Valuable Testimonial presented to him—Fête at the Director's Residence—Quality of the Company Invited—Noble and Artistic *Mélange*—Close of the Season—My Departure for the Continent—My first impression of the young *Prima Donna*, Sophie Cruvelli, at Rovigo—Opinion of her Talent held by Rubini 187

CHAPTER XVI.

Season of 1848—Sophie Cruvelli—Belletti—Cuzzani—The Ballet "Fiorita"—Verdi's "Attila"—Abbadia—Sophie Vera—Performance for the Benefit of Distressed Artisans—Labocetta—Reappearance of Jenny Lind—The Farewell Night—Tadolini—"Les Quatre Saisons"—Decline of the Ballet—Jenny Lind's determination to quit the Stage 206

CHAPTER XVII.

Approach of the Season of 1849—Uncertainty respecting the Engagement of Jenny Lind—Rumours about the influence exercised on her by persons of social eminence—The real facts of the case—The Journey to Paris—The meeting with Catalani—Digression—Notes on Rossini 230

CHAPTER XVIII.

Season of 1849—Engagement of Alboni, Parodi, and Frezzolini for the season of 1849—Efficiency of the "troupe," as a whole—Giuliani—*Début* of Mademoiselle Parodi—Interest taken in her success by Madame Pasta—Jenny Lind consents to sing, in the Theatre, the opera of "Il Flauto Magico," of Mozart—Incomplete success of the performance—Jenny Lind reappears in Opera—Delight of the audience at her return to the boards—Her farewell night described—The Director is led to hope that Madame Sontag may return to the lyric stage—Good offices of M. Thalberg in bringing this to an issue 239

CHAPTER XIX.

Provincial Tour of Mademoiselle Sontag—A Railway Accident—Sontag Concerts in Paris—Difficulty in obtaining the Salle du Conservatoire—Kindness of the President Louis Napoleon—Great success of the Concerts—Resuscitation of the Faubourg St. Germain—Season of 1850—Parodi in "Medea"—Reappearance of Sims Reeves—Catherine Hayes—Baucardé—"La Tempesta," by Halévy and Scribe—Fête at the "Chancellors"—Reappearance of Pasta—The "Black Malibran"—*Début* of Fiorentini—Direction of the "Italiens" at Paris—New Difficulties—Victor Hugo and Rachel 261

CHAPTER XX.

The Great Exhibition in Hyde Park—Preparations for the Entertainment of "All Nations" by the Opera Management—Opening of the Theatre with Caroline Duprez—Her Reception—Production of "Gustavus III."—The "Muta di Portici," with Mdlle. Monti—Her Talent as a Mime—*Rentrée* of Madame Sontag—"Gala" Representation, to celebrate the Opening of the Exhibition—"Le Tre Nozze" of Alary "mounted"—Its Success—"Don Giovanni"—Sims Reeves—Return of Sophie Cruvelli—"Fidelio" brought out for the first time at Her Majesty's Theatre—Obliging Conduct of the leading Singers in assisting to give Effect to the "Chorus of Prisoners"—The Opera very successful—The "Enfant Prodigue" of Auber strongly cast—Madame Ugalde—Production of "Florinda" by M. Thalberg—Its Effect diminished by the dulness of the "Libretto"—State Visit of the Queen to "The Old House"—Barbieri-Nini—Balfe's Opera—Fête at my Villa 296

CHAPTER XXI.

The Season of 1852—Artists in Prospect—Mdlle. Wagner, Mdme. Sontag, Gardoni, Beletti, &c.—Disappointment created by Sontag's Inability to come to England—Opening Night, April 1st, with "Maria di Rohan"—Ferlotti—The Wagners' Breach of Engagement, caused by Mr. Gye's Endeavours to attach Mdlle. Wagner to the Covent Garden "Troupe"—Unfounded Rumours of Desertion on the Part of Leading Artists—Injurious Effects of the Wagner Failure—The Friends of the Theatre hold a Meeting, with a View to support the Director—High Quality of the Parties concerned in this Movement—Resolutions adopted at the Meeting—Tendency of the Arrangement come to, not wholly Advantageous—Madame Lagrange, her Value at this juncture—Illusory Hopes of Sontag's Return towards End of Season—Madame Charton engaged—Production of "Casilda" in August—Not successful—Close of the Season, under uneasy Auguries 327

CHAPTER XXII.

Schemes for renovating the Prosperity of the Opera—An "Association" contemplated, to carry it on as a Joint-stock Company—Difficulty of legalizing such an Association—The Earl Dudley—

His first Connexion with the Theatre—His Lordship and Sir Ralph Howard step forward to prevent the Dispersion of the "properties"—Indications afforded of Lord Dudley's views: viz., of taking the Management of the Opera—Negociations opened with leading Artists accordingly—Alarmed by the Conduct of the principal Creditors, Lord Dudley renounces the Design—Retrospect of the embarrassing Course of Affairs during previous year—Intolerable Hardship of the Legal Persecution—Efforts made to obtain possession of "Her Majesty's Theatre" by Mr. Gye—Mr. Benedict's Views on the Theatre—Abandoned on account of the Complexity of its Obligations—The Theatre remains Closed from 1852 to 1856—Covent Garden Opera House Burnt down, March, 1856—My Return to London—Revival of Her Majesty's Theatre—I resume the Direction of the Opera—Controlling Authority exercised by Lord Dudley, now become the principal Creditor of the Establishment—Necessity compels me to part with my Lease to my noble Patron—Reluctance mitigated by the Assurances of Lord Dudley's Resolution to take no Advantage of his Position—Lord Dudley Underlets the Theatre for a Term of Years—Harassing Litigation—Final Appeal of the vexatious Ejectment Suit pending in the House of Lords—Anxious Situation prior to the Reopening of the Theatre in 1856 350

CHAPTER XXIII.

Hasty Preparations for Reopening Her Majesty's Theatre—Mdlle. Johanna Wagner engaged again—Surprise consequent upon this Announcement—Effective Character of the new "Company"—The Director's "Address" issued to the Subscribers and the Public—The opening night in May described—General Satisfaction of the Patrons of the Opera with the renewed Activity of the Management—Mournful Absence of Lablache, struck by Mortal Sickness—Alboni's Return—*Début* of Mdlle. Piccolomini—Her Remarkable position on the Stage—Her Great Success—Marie Taglioni, MM. Charles and Vauders in Ballet—*Début* of Mdlle. Wagner in "Romeo"—Her Merits, what?—Successful Course of Affairs—Durable Attraction of Piccolomini—Anecdotes of Lablache 365

CHAPTER XXIV.

Brief Notice of the "Jullien Concerts" at the Opera House, in 1856—The *Bal Masque*—Comments of the Press thereon—Departure of

the Director for Italy—Mdlle. Ortolani—Her Qualifications for the Stage set forth by Correspondents—Verdi invited to produce a New Opera, "Imogen"—Engagement of Signor Giuglini, and Mdlle. Pocchini, the "Italian Danseuse"—The English Minister at Turin—Introduces Me to Count Cavour—Conversation with the Count on the Journey from Turin—Visits to various Cities, unproductive of Results—Death of Artists of Merit—Altered Character of the Opera Audiences—A wider Range of Support given by the General Public than that hitherto afforded by the Aristocratic Class—This Element less certain than the old "Subscription" as a Source of Profit—Activity of the Competition between the two Opera Establishments—Constancy of the British People to their favourite Artists—Giuglini—Anecdote concerning him . 391

CHAPTER XXV.

Ample "Bill of Fare" provided for the Season of 1857—Cordial Approval of the Same by the Subscribers—Opening Night—Brilliant *Début* of Signor Giuglini—His Reception Flattering—Mdlle. Spezia—Pocchini—The Ballet; eclipsed by the Lyric Artist's Success—*Rentrée* of Piccolomini—Warmly welcomed by Audience—Ortolani—Her Merits described—Predominant Attraction of Piccolomini—Mdme. Alboni—Her Vocal Perfection—Signor Corsi's *Début*—The Opera of "Don Giovanni" produced with strong Cast—Its Attraction—New Work brought out for Rosati, "Mario Spada"—Vexatious Incidents in reference to the Claims of inferior Danseuses to prominent Positions—Arrival of Marie Taglioni—Close of the Season—Extra Performances—The Marchesa Piccolomini's interference in Mdlle. Piccolomini's Affairs—Good Feeling displayed by the Latter towards the Management—Giuglini True and Loyal also—Solid Success of the Operatic Season, Discouraging Circumstances notwithstanding—The Winter Operas . 403

CHAPTER XXVI.

Director's visit to Vienna, in view of the Season of 1858—Engagement of Mdlle. Tietjens for Her Majesty's Theatre—Prince Metternich—His Kindness towards me—His love of Music—Harassing uncertainties as to the Result of the Appeal to the House of Lords—Sudden change in the conduct of Lord Ward—His peremptory demands of Payment of Rent—I give up my last Rights over the Property to Appease my Creditor—Opening Night of the Season, April 13th—Giuglini and Tietjens in the "Huguenots"—A Brilliant Success—

The "Trovatore," with Tietjens and Alboni—Piccolomini still commands the Favour of the Public—"La Serva Padrona" brought out for her—Borne down by successive Reverses, I resolve on Retiring from my Arduous and now Dependent Position—Possession of the Theatre given up to Lord Ward's Agent, 1858—Consolation afforded me by the Retrospect of my Career and the Attachment of my Friends 428

REMINISCENCES OF THE OPERA.

CHAPTER I.

Interest Attached to Her Majesty's Theatre—Difficulties Attending the Management of Italian Opera in London—Difficulties Arising from the Legal Condition of the Property—History of Legal Complications—M. Laporte as Manager of Her Majesty's Theatre—My First Connexion with this Gentleman—Character of M. Laporte—Anecdotes—The Artist's Cabal and its Hindrances—Severini, Malibran, and Grisi.

THE ancient sympathies attached to the fortunes of the old historical Italian Opera-house, once the "King's Theatre," now generally known by the name of "Her Majesty's Theatre," have still, in spite of the establishment of a second Italian opera, so strong a hold upon the minds of a vast portion of the musical and fashionable circles of London society, that a history of a management which occupied a striking and signal period of its existence, cannot fail to command a considerable share of interest.

The history of the management of any great theatre devoted to operatic performances has its importance, as that of a mighty state in the realm of art; and some interest as well as curiosity must always attach not only to the government of its ruler and the fortunes of

his rule, but to the career of a man who, in his operatic world, may be regarded as the venturous leader of an army in a troubled country, or as one of the boldest of mariners on a stormy and dangerous ocean. And nowhere has the manager to struggle with such fearful hazards as in England.

A great operatic establishment in this country, unlike similar enterprises on the Continent, is and must remain a matter of, whether individual or collective, private speculation. In other countries the enormous expenses of operatic undertakings are often lightened to managers by Government subventions. In some cases the operatic theatres are court theatres, kept up by grants from civil lists, or are wholly in the hands of the head of the state; or they are supported by municipal bodies, as is the case with many of the smaller continental theatres. But Parliaments in our constitutional country are chary of granting public monies for theatres as schools of art; while, at the same time, there scarcely exists a single operatic theatre that has been successfully supported without either government or municipal aid. An operatic manager in England is consequently obliged to take the whole risks of a vast speculation upon his own shoulders, and is subjected to certain difficulties unknown in foreign countries; difficulties which will be treated of as this narrative proceeds.

The management of Her Majesty's Theatre and all the affairs connected with it have ever been seriously obstructed by the complications of an almost inextricable tangle, arising from the legal condition of the property. This was one of hopeless confusion, which the original legal title, the disputes respecting possession, and the interminable lawsuits arising from jarring interests, ren-

dered "twice confounded." In the history of property, there has probably been no parallel instance wherein the legal labyrinth has been so difficult to thread. Bold must have been the man then, who would adventure into the midst of a thorny thicket, whence each successive clue put into his hands as a guide seemed less rightly adapted than the preceding one to lead him to the light of day!

Impossible though it would be to give any clear detail or explanatory plan of this labyrinth, a succinct sketch of its leading peculiarities may be considered indispensable to a right understanding of many points upon which it will be hereafter necessary to touch in this "History of Management."

The ground on which the "King's Theatre" was built formed a part of the demesnes of the Crown, and was originally leased to a Mr. Holloway for a term, which was eventually extended by a further grant to the year 1891*—the audience portion of the theatre and that occupied by the stage being held, it would appear, on separate leases.† The theatre, when built, was let in the first place to a Mr. Taylor, who introduced the system of selling, from time to time, for a term of years, a certain number of the boxes to frequenters of the theatre, as "property boxes." Mr. Taylor sold various portions of his property and subsequently mortgaged the remainder to a Mr. Goold, who assumed the direction soon after; and, upon the death of this latter gentleman, there began the series of disputes and consequent

* One of the conditions being that the lessee should erect a theatre on the ground.

† The lease, which was subsequently granted to me, placed the two in the same position.

Chancery suits from which the property, during a long period, was never exempt. Differences arose between Taylor, the manager, and Waters, the executor of Mr. Goold, which called forth the interference of Chancery, and were continued, with oscillating fortunes, between the two parties, until eventually the whole property was purchased by Waters, and, then mortgaged by him for the purpose of raising the purchase money, to Mr. Chambers, the banker. Embarrassments, however, came over the venture of Mr. Waters, and the property was seized under an execution at the suit of Chambers, who subsequently became the sole proprietor. The bankruptcy of Mr. Chambers occurred shortly afterwards, and the most grievous complications arose from the pertinacity with which that gentleman refused to accept the position of bankrupt. Inextricable disputes with assignees and other claimants next ensued, and, from this time—indeed from the very first establishment of the theatre—the law, with its baleful influence, has scarcely ever ceased to hover over its walls.

At this juncture, Mr. Ebers the bookseller, who had long been connected with the affairs of the theatre, was urged by the box-proprietors and subscribers to undertake the management of the opera, and he accordingly did so, with varying fortunes during seven years; relinquishing it finally, as a losing concern, to be replaced by Messrs. Laporte and Laurent. The connexion of M. Laurent with the opera-house was soon severed, and it fell under the sole management of M. Laporte, a celebrated French actor, and in many respects a remarkable man.

It was at this stage of the history that my first connexion with the establishment—a connexion destined to

exercise a lasting influence on my life and fortunes—arose, without the faintest anticipation on my part of the important results to which that first slender link was to lead.

It was in the year 1835, that, having just commenced business practice as a Solicitor and Parliamentary Agent, I was requested by M. Laporte to assist him in a legal capacity. The tenant and manager was at that period involved in serious embarrassments, which led shortly afterwards to his arrest and incarceration in the Fleet prison, wherein, by a singular coincidence, Mr. Chambers was also at that very time a prisoner. As the new legal adviser of the distressed manager I was, however, fortunate enough to be able (by representing to his creditors that the imprisonment of a debtor whose means of payment could only be derived from his personal exertions, was not the best method of securing a favourable result to themselves), to obtain his discharge after a very few days. The arrest and detention, however, hastened a crisis, which resulted in the bankruptcy of Laporte. But at the same time the assignees, having learned by experience how much the value of the property depended upon the judgment and knowledge of the director, did their best to keep the theatre virtually in the hands of Laporte, by granting a year's lease of it to his own father, with the express stipulation that the son should have the sole and entire direction of the operatic affairs. His management, therefore, continued without interruption, although during this period he passed through the Bankruptcy Court. In the following year he resumed the character of lessee, and continued to manage the theatre.

The commencement of the season of 1836 then, found

Laporte once more in undisputed possession of the theatre and of its direction. The financial and business part of the establishment had been for some time past in the greatest disorder. An active assistant, uniting a spirit of order to legal and financial knowledge, was needed, to bring the chaos into an intelligible and working form. The confidence inspired in Laporte by the services I had rendered him, induced him now to urge me to undertake the superintendence of the financial department of the theatre. Won over by this earnest solicitation, influenced, probably, by love of art, flattered and gratified, as any one might have been, by the confidence of a man so highly gifted as was M. Laporte with talent and ready wit, I at length consented to postpone my intention of going to the Bar (for which I was then studying with my tutor and esteemed friend, Mr. Basil Montagu), and to accept the duties thus pressed upon me. It could not but be gratifying to an aspirant just entering life, that a man like Laporte, whose unpopularity, arising from a thorough independence of character and scorn of petty observances, and whose mistrust of all around him, in a position where intrigue and deceit met him at every turn, had well-nigh rendered misanthropical, should unreservedly bestow on him his confidence, seek his counsel, and bend to his influence.*

Not a step of any consequence was henceforth taken without my advice being sought by Laporte. There exists an anecdote to the effect that, when observations

* A journey with Laporte through Germany and the North of Italy, in which pleasure was united with the search after artistic novelties, confirmed the mutual consideration that had thus sprung up, and which ended only with Laporte's death.

were made to Laporte on this strange confiding of all his best interests to one so young, his invariable reply would be, "He is not yet old enough to have been spoiled. *Voilà!*"

Once thus engaged, I was quickly drawn into the artistic vortex about me and gradually initiated into the science of management; and I not only acquired the experience, without which no such enterprise can be suitably conducted, but was enabled to study the faults, the foibles, and deviations from right judgment which were observable in the director's course. The knowledge thus gained was insensibly fitting me for the position I was afterwards destined to fill, although at that period I should have regarded it as improbable, and even undesirable, to the last degree.

Subject as he was to occasional periods of despondency and depression, M. Laporte unquestionably exercised a considerable influence over the minds of those around him by his vivacity, his clearsightedness, his knowledge of the world, and that independence of spirit which was among his better qualities, although it sometimes so much overcame his discretion as to create for him bitter enemies. An anecdote may be permitted here, perhaps, as singularly characteristic of his clearsightedness and humour combined. One day a great artist (a *very great* artist) engaged at the theatre, called on him, apparently in a violent rage, respecting some subject in dispute.

"I see what it is, my dear L.," said Laporte, tranquilly, "your wife has ordered you to put yourself in a passion!"

The humour with which this remark was made tickled the artist; he burst out laughing, and replied,

"This is too bad! I came here for a row, and it is not fair to disappoint me."

Scarcely less characteristic of the man was Laporte's retort upon *the* Cerito. This celebrated *danseuse* was constantly exhibiting a jealousy of fancied privileges and preferences shown to Taglioni. On her once sending back the ticket of a box (which had been given her upon an upper tier), with the remark that she was "much too young to be exalted to the skies before her proper time," M. Laporte, who had given a box on the same tier to Taglioni, replied that he "had done his best, but that possibly he had been wrong in placing the lady on the same level (*le même rang*) with Mademoiselle Taglioni."

His independence of spirit is evidenced by a letter to me, in which he complains of obstructions to his management, created, as was alleged, in the highest quarters. "I cannot suppose," he writes of a communication just received, "that it really emanates from the Queen;* but whether it does or not, such a system of incessant annoyance must be met in a decisive manner. . . . We must concoct a letter, very respectful, but the purport of which is to make the Queen, or those who pretend to act under her name, understand that there is between sovereign and subject a line, which neither have a right to overpass. I have been at war all my life with the Semiramides, Anna Bolenas, and such queens; but I really did not expect to have the honour to oppose a real, living, natural queen."

Together with his very valuable qualities, however, M. Laporte's management was characterised by dilatori-

* Laporte was right. Her Majesty's august name was then unjustifiably used—as it has often been subsequently by parties whose access to the palace gave colour to their assertions.

ness, and above all by a waywardness of humour, induced probably by impaired health. He would abandon for a time important resolutions and necessary rules for the preservation of his authority in the theatre, and resume them only by fits and starts, bearing the appearance of caprice.

There is no doubt that in a great measure he possessed the key to the sympathy of his "subjects," and would, on most occasions, persuade an artist to comply with his requirements; but towards the latter years of his life, he had become deficient in the art of enforcing discipline, and of maintaining order in the establishment. Accordingly, the *troupe* followed the dictates of their own caprices or their respective personal interests, regardless of the general welfare of the opera; whilst a few of the principal artists, finding themselves encouraged and supported in their course by some young men of fashion outside the walls, gradually acquired an unreasonable and confessedly mischievous influence over the management of the theatre.

It was this cabal, amounting in the little kingdom of the Opera to a revolutionary conspiracy, continually fighting for mastery over the master, which, it will be seen, led the way to the memorable "secession," and to the establishment of a second Italian Opera. From all the evidence afforded by the annals of the theatre at this period, it would scarcely be unreasonable, much less cruel, to suppose that the constant insubordination, the incessant annoyances, and the wear and tear of mind, occasioned by the habitual conflicts between manager and artists, materially hastened the death of M. Laporte. It is sufficiently well attested that the director was scarcely allowed a voice in the selection of operas, or

even in the choice of the artists to be employed. Opportune "colds" and "indispositions" had to be accepted as reasons for change of performances and refusal of "parts," whenever it suited caprice, or desire to thwart, on the part of any one of the powerful cabal; until the term "singer's illness" passed into a proverb.

This distracted state of government, or mis-government, M. Laporte was destined to leave to his successor as one of many difficulties to be overcome; and the "History of a Management" will have to dwell frequently, and at some length, upon the intrigues of a *clique*, then generally termed, in operatic circles, *La Vieille Garde*. For in assuming the reins of government, he found himself at the very outset obliged to guide a "team," the individuals composing which were always rearing, plunging, and "kicking over the traces," at the imminent risk of upsetting the whole opera chariot at any moment.

Before concluding this chapter, I may be allowed a digression in the shape of an anecdote of Severini, director of the Italiens in Paris, which will illustrate the tyranny of artists. Severini had occasion to be greatly displeased with Madame Malibran, and animadverted on her conduct in severe terms. The Diva, conscious of her power over the subscribers and the public, and believing that the theatre could not go on without her, observed—"Sir, if you are dissatisfied with me, the remedy is easy. Let us cancel our engagement." "Très bien, Madame," replied Severini, drily, and, sending for his "double" of the engagement, he requested the astonished Diva to hand over her own duplicate, or counterpart thereof, and having placed one within the other, he coolly and leisurely tore them into pieces.

Rossini, whose direction of the music spread a lustre over the establishment, observed to the manager—"You have sacrificed 100,000 francs a year." "That may be," said Severini, "but I prefer to secure my peace of mind."

Malibran, then in the zenith of her power, knew not that another star was soon to rise above the horizon, and rival her own lustre. Giulia Grisi was singing at Milan, the *Adelgisa* to Pasta's *Norma*—this opera having, not long before, been written by Bellini for Pasta, Grisi, and Donzelli, the great tenore-serio of the day. Severini sent in hot haste to Milan—then, as now, the artistic mart of Italy; and four of the most promising young "soprani" were despatched to him in Paris. Three were tried without success; but Grisi, one of the four, soon gave tokens of excellence.

Grisi was at that time, it must be said, far from realising all that a connoisseur could have desired; but her voice and beauty pleaded for her, and she interested the public, whilst the advantage of singing at the side of such artists as Rubini and Lablache was incontestable. She was ere long accepted, and adopted by the Parisians as a child of their own creation, and, in 1834, her performance in "I Puritani" (written by Bellini for her as *prima donna*, and for Rubini, Tamburini, and Lablache in the other parts), raised her to the very summit of stage popularity.

CHAPTER II.

Commencement of Cabal on the Part of the Principal Singers—Unsuccessful Attempt to Defeat this by M. Laporte—The "Tamburini Row"—Importance Attached to the Ballet—Difficulty of Obtaining Good Ballets—Legal Embarrassments Arising out of Mr. Chambers' Insolvency—Negotiations for Purchase of Theatre—M. Laporte's Absence in France—His Sudden Death—I am left Executor—My Hasty Return to England.

So intimately was I mixed up with all the latter period of the management of Laporte, that references to the more important events of my predecessor's last seasons are necessary to a right understanding of my own direction. This period, indeed, almost furnishes a clue to the history of my future rule, and must be fully dwelt upon, just as the latter years of a reigning sovereign must in some degree be taken into consideration in any account of the accession of his heir.

More than all was the influence of the powerful clique of artists, already mentioned in the preceding chapter, fated to give a direct bias to the fortunes of the succeeding management. The latter period, then, of the Laporte management was a stormy one within doors. The working of the volcano was displayed before the public in an explosion, familiarly known, at the time, as the "Tamburini row," but never understood in all its hidden bearings, except by a very few initiated in

operatic matters. The manœuvres of *la vieille garde*, which produced this strange and violent result, have yet to be explained.

Instinctively aware, probably, of the force and truth of the old parable of the bundle of sticks, the clique of artists had determined that the best way of ensuring to themselves supreme power in the government of the opera, was to found a close coalition, and a conspiracy to "stick together." It was resolved that they should announce their determination to resist every effort of the director to vary the composition of the Phalanx, by declaring that not one of them would engage singly—in other words, that M. Laporte must agree to take them collectively, or not at all. The *prima donna*, who was looked upon as the "head and front" of the coalition, had confessed as much to the manager, although she declared that she had reserved to herself the right of acting separately whenever she chose. The plan appears to have been based upon the prospective engagement of all the artists in a body by M. Marliani, on behalf of the Paris Director, a combination which would have compelled M. Laporte to refer and defer entirely to that gentleman. Fully cognisant of this arrangement, worried beyond all powers of endurance, by the annoyances, the obstructions, and the insolence of "the Cabal," M. Laporte had, at one time, determined to commence the season of 1842 with an entirely new company. In one of his extant letters, he writes of his intention to get rid of the "blessed lot." Meanwhile, as early as 1840, he resolved upon making a beginning towards breaking up the clique and foiling their schemes, by the non-engagement of one of their number. Tamburini was fixed upon for this purpose, as his place could be

supplied by Coletti, then one of the most popular singers in Italy. Determined not to be thus thwarted, the *vieille garde* resolved on war—not open war, which would have put them in the wrong with the public, and popular opinion—but a guerilla warfare, which was to be carried on behind a screen of noble "lay figures."

Madame Grisi, at that time in the zenith of her beauty and her artistic fame, held in allegiance beneath her fair, soft sceptre, a whole string of young fashionables of the day, over whom she had acquired an extraordinary influence. At the head of this group was a noble Viscount, whose duel with her husband, M. de Melcy, had furnished one of the notable scandals of the town, and whose partizanship in the battle about to be fought she scorned to deny. These, then, were the skirmishers, ready to aid the campaign of a commander who could direct the manœuvres, although unable to appear openly in the field. For this purpose no better "Lieutenant" could be desired than the noble Lord already referred to; and it is well known that the plan of attack was arranged in the House of Commons, of which he was at that time a member. Thus Madame Grisi, "like another Helen, fired another Troy," by the hands of her allies, who, it is to be presumed, were proud of the rank they held in the encounter.

It is probable that as the *vieille garde* were absent in Paris on the first appearance of Coletti, it was deemed advisable to do no more than put forward a "feeler." This much is certain, that upon the opening of the season of 1841, no open hostility was manifested. Coletti (who appeared in the part of *Torquato Tasso*) was received, it is true, with a few hisses and calls for

"Tamburini," but these demonstrations were quickly put down by the better sense of the great majority of the house. The scheme had not yet been "pushed." On the next appearance of Coletti, however, the explosion, so carefully prepared, took place. The famous *omnibus* boxes were filled, towards the conclusion of the opera, with the fashionable allies of the coalition; and it was from this quarter that, on the fall of the curtain, the uproar first commenced. Shouts of "Tamburini!" "Laporte!" "Tamburini!" were taken up and echoed by partisans, and easily-led public clamourers, in various parts of the house; whilst many of the genuine public raised the counter cries of "Shame!" "No intimidation!" "Don't be bullied!" and even evidenced their sense of the real cause of the disturbance by shouting "Turn out the omnibus!" responded to by the occupants with cries of "You had better try!" Several times M. Laporte appeared, and endeavoured to address the audience, but the deafening clamour rendered him inaudible. Yells, hisses, shouts, overpowered every other sound. A sort of stormy conference took place, during this scene of confusion, between the manager and the tenants of the omnibus boxes, whose rage seemed to increase as the "row" warmed their blood. The curtain at last rose upon the *ballet*. Cerito was that evening to have made her first appearance. For more than an hour the scared *coryphées* stood ready to begin. In vain! For the fourth time M. Laporte appeared. He seemed to have succumbed, for, in answer to direct appeals on the point, he promised to make propositions to Tamburini. But even this did not appear sufficient to the originators of the row. They still hooted, and, at last, the whole party of the noble

and fashionable occupants of the omnibus boxes leaped on the stage, among them a young Prince of the Blood. The curtain now fell definitively, and, amidst the sympathetic cheers of one portion of the house and the hootings of another, the gallant chevaliers of the "omnibus" waved their hats triumphantly, and shouted "Victory!"

Thus ended the first act of the great "Tamburini Row." During the whirlwind of the elements, I had gone, as Laporte's chief co-adjutor, to the box of the Duchess of Cambridge, that I might entreat Her Royal Highness to use her influence with the originators of the disturbance. I had even, at the suggestion of Her Royal Highness, entered the very citadel of the foe, and exerted my efforts towards the establishment of peace. When, however, I demurred to the request that I would use my influence with M. Laporte to induce him to yield to the unreasoning and unreasonable exigencies of a coalition, my expostulations were unheeded, and the "row" re-commenced with undiminished vigour. *

Thus, then, triumphed the "clique." After a confused and contradictory paper war between Messrs. Laporte and Tamburini, and another, but less exciting, disturbance on the following opera night, Laporte gave up the point. The good offices of Count D'Orsay were

* After the doors were closed, M. Laporte walked out with me to enjoy the fresh air. It was a calm, clear night, contrasting strongly with the storm which, but an hour before, had raged within. We talked over the occurrences of the evening. "I must give in," said Laporte, "and treat them as spoiled children." "But if you give a child what he cries for," I rejoined, "he will soon learn that crying is the readiest mode of gaining his wishes." "Yet most nurses do this," was Laporte's reply—an acute and pertinent remark.

employed in mediation: the manager yielded to the pressure, and bowed before the storm. Tamburini was re-engaged, and was so deeply affected by what he chose to consider the "sympathy of the public," that he shed tears of emotion. "If those tears could but be analysed," said Laporte, with his usual dry humour, "their component parts would be found to be of gold and silver." But the clique had won the day. The public had been the dupe of the manœuvres of the few, when it believed in the genuine feelings of the so-called "enthusiasts of art." * It knew nothing of the unartistic motives hidden beneath the surface. Nor did even M. Laporte, when he submitted to this tyrannical demand, know how much his defeat was destined, by giving fresh strength to the conspiracy, to affect the future prosperity of the theatre.

Notwithstanding the importance attached to itself, as being necessary to the support of the theatre, by *la vieille garde*, it is very clear, from all the records of the establishment, that more reliance was to be placed, at this period, on the ballet as a source of attraction with the subscribers (especially the men of fashion) than on the legitimate opera. To judge from the dissatisfaction expressed at the tardiness of Laporte in providing a new and striking ballet for the opening of the season of 1841, and from the bitter complaints of ballet-master and scene-painter that "they had nothing to do," it might almost be supposed that financial success was to be built upon the ballet alone. Even the despondency of

* It will be perceived how little value the gentlemen of the omnibus box really attached to the engagement of Signor Tamburini, when it is stated that, on the first appearance of that singer, after their triumph, both the omnibus box and the stalls were without occupants, and remained so till the ballet!

M. Laporte at this period, arising probably from the state of his health, about to give way entirely, seems to have proceeded as much from his difficulty in providing good dancers and attractive ballets, as from the annoyances occasioned by the obstructions and manœuvres of the vocalists. Although conscious from time to time that his strength was failing him in mind as well as in body, M. Laporte seems, during this last season, to have rallied occasionally, and to have manifested some of his ancient energy, vivacity, and spirit. In 1841 he prepared matters for the campaign of 1842, discussing "programmes" and forming engagements; and he appears to have even contemplated undertaking the direction of the Italian opera in Paris, conjointly with that in London. He, moreover, contrived to win back a portion of his ancient popularity by resuming, during the season we have been treating of, his former profession of an actor, performing in the "Précieuses Ridicules," and the "Dépit Amoureux," on three of the nights of the first season of Rachel in London—viz., in 1841.

Much that is interesting respecting that celebrated actress, who at that time, unsullied in reputation, was courted by the highest and most exclusive society in London, and greatly favoured by the Queen, might be culled from the opera records of the period. But the subject would occupy too great a space to allow of more than a brief mention here; although when she reappears, under my own immediate management, she will receive her due prominence in its history.

The stormy season of 1841 came to a close; and, although the note of preparation was already sounded for the season of 1842, there were many matters connected with the legal position of the theatre, which

created uneasiness in the mind of the lessee, respecting his situation in the coming year.

The assignees of Mr. Chambers, who appeared in the character of lessors of the opera-house, had been, for years past, unable to come to any decisive settlement as to the property. His bankruptcy had become a case famous in legal annals, not only from the apparently endless litigation it had occasioned, and the knotty points of law and even fact involved—but from the peculiar position of Mr. Chambers himself, who had resolutely chosen to remain a prisoner in the Fleet rather than recognise the legality of his bankruptcy—a matter obstinately disputed, and fought, in various courts, with fresh evidence in proof or in refutation at every turn, and with fluctuating results. During all this period, the assignees had abstained from any sale of the property, which an adverse decision would have rendered null, at the same time that it would have entailed very serious consequences upon themselves. Eventually, however, between the years 1839-40, an arrangement had been effected between the conflicting parties; and the assignees judged themselves enabled to offer the theatre for sale. Fears were naturally entertained by M. Laporte that the theatre might fall into the hands of persons adverse to his interests; and he strongly solicited me to find the means, through my numerous friends,* of purchasing the pro-

* Among those friends was a certain nobleman, well known to take an interest in opera affairs. With this nobleman, I made a journey to Italy about this time; and, dining one day with the British Minister at Turin (Sir Augustus Foster), I was seated next to the Pope's Nuncio, an intelligent and amiable person. Lord ——, perceiving that we were engaged in familiar conversation, slyly whispered to me an inquiry whether I had induced the legate to put down the name of His Holiness as a subscriber?

perty, with the understanding that he should be granted a fresh lease, under the new proprietary, for a certain number of years, at a fixed rental. And in the year 1840 (the last but one of the Laporte management), negociations to this effect took a substantial form, inasmuch as instructions had already been given for the preparation of a provisional contract, to serve until the title could be investigated and the purchase completed. Such, then, was the state of the property, when the eventful season of 1841 had run through its tumultuous course.

Thoroughly worn out with the jarring conflict of his administration, M. Laporte retired, seeking some repose and relief to his overstrained mind, to a house which he possessed on the banks of the Seine, near Corbeil; while I myself, almost equally fatigued with the unusually distracting business of the theatre, and other heavy professional work, sought relaxation in a continental tour. We parted, on the understanding that we were to spend a week together, in the autumn, at Corbeil, but were destined never to meet again. At Strasburg, whither I had given directions to have my letters addressed, with the intention of either proceeding to Paris or taking a longer journey to Switzerland and Italy, according to the intelligence they contained and the urgency of the business they might disclose, I found a mass of correspondence awaiting me. The first letter I opened gave me the sad intelligence of the sudden death of the friend I had left so short a time before in tolerable health. Laporte had died of disease of the heart, aggravated probably by the trials and emotions under which he had for so long a time suffered.

The blow was startling. Horses were immediately ordered, and I set off in hot haste for Paris. The jour-

ney was effected with a rapidity which in those days sounded almost marvellous; for railways were not, and the government mail absorbed the available posting resources of the road. Deeply shocked and afflicted as I was by the intelligence I had just received, and engrossing as were the thoughts it brought in its train, I had but one feeling constantly in my mind during my hurried journey —namely, that I should now be enabled to give up all connexion with the theatre, and return to my strictly professional career. For some years previously, when once I conceived that I had placed the interests of the opera on a sound financial basis, I had desired to detach myself from occupations which interfered with other and more solid pursuits; I had been withheld from putting this desire into practice, solely by the entreaties of Laporte, who protested, that, without my aid as co-adjutor, the theatre would relapse into its former state of confusion, and that he himself would be obliged, thus deserted, to throw up all, or expect only ruin and disaster. But the time of freedom had at last arrived. The affairs of the opera would absorb and distract me no more. Thus I argued. How little do we know of our future, is the most trite of familiar remarks. But here it bears a peculiar significance.

On arriving in Paris, I found that I had been appointed joint-executor of the late M. Laporte's will, along with Mr. Henry Broadwood, then Member of Parliament for Bridgewater. My more urgent business, however, compelled my return to London, in order to come to some understanding with the assignees of Mr. Chambers, relative to the matters in abeyance between them and Laporte's estate. My first communication to my friends announced, that I intended to break off altogether my

connexion with the affairs of the opera. But following immediately upon this announcement there came a letter from the noble Lord, who has been already mentioned, and who was well known to be greatly interested in operatic matters, urging me to undertake myself the sole direction; with unqualified promises not only of adding his personal support and influence, but of every assistance towards effecting the purchase of the property. This communication was followed by earnest solicitations to the same effect from various other quarters. The assignees, as holders of the property, urged me in every way to undertake the concern, on the ground that I was the man most deeply versed in all the complicated affairs of the establishment, and most cognisant of the intricacies of its management. The temptation was great; but I still hesitated. Not only my earnest desire to devote all my time once more to my profession held me back—there was another consideration that with equal force, probably, deterred me from giving my immediate consent. I could not shut out from my mind the bitter and harassing annoyances to which Laporte had been subjected by certain of the artistes, comprising Grisi, Persiani, Tamburini, and others, composing the so-called *vieille garde*.

The dread of finding myself in a similar position of humiliation and distress was among the gravest of my objections. But the man, not less than the woman, who deliberates, is lost. I wavered, and was eventually persuaded to take the burthen of the management on myself. The die was cast, and the sole direction of the great Italian Opera House in London was henceforward placed in my hands.

The era of my management now begins.

CHAPTER III.

Qualities needed for Governing an Establishment like that of the Opera —Contrast between these and the Character of the late Lessee—The Theatres in England Unassisted by Government—Serious Nature of the Enterprise as Dependent on Individual Resources—Reflections on my Peculiar Position—Advantageous Experience acquired in M. Laporte's time—Favour shown by the Nobility and others on my entering upon the Direction of Her Majesty's Theatre—The Fêtes at my Villa on the Thames—Their Attraction.

WITH the season of 1842 my reign commenced. The hazard of the enterprise was unquestionably great—the responsibility not less. True, I had not taken the sceptre in hand without an understanding of the difficulties and dangers before me. Indeed, during all the years of my intimacy with the affairs of the theatre, I had not only had time to become acquainted with the vast and complicated machinery of its government, but I also had daily opportunities to study the faults as well as the merits of my predecessor's rule. Among the latter I may reckon M. Laporte's intelligent appreciation of the temper and requirements of the public, his knowledge of character, the gift of personal influence; among the former, the habit of procrastination, and the ever sanguine hope of finding a way out of any dilemma by the prompt resources of his rare ability. "To learn the art of war by observing the faults of others" was one

of the great maxims of the "Iron Duke," as I was informed by his successor. During this period, also, I had been able to acquire a very considerable influence over all the persons connected with the theatre. I had soon learned to liken the stage before me to a little state, where jealousies, intrigues, and factions were constantly called into play; where the spirit of revolution was ever ready to lift its head, and where the opposition of enemies, with fancied causes for grievance, was ever at hand to crush the embryo of an adverse plan, or strangle it, if maturing towards execution. I had learned at the same time to oppose to these evil elements of anarchy a policy of silence and reserve, and I determined rigidly to abstain from all direct interference in matters not immediately belonging to my own functions. This policy, while it gained for me among the artists the *soubriquet* of "*L'Homme Mystérieux*," enabled me to exercise the influence which inscrutability and mystery often do command, especially with the demonstrative and impatient foreigner. The knowledge that among persons of an imaginative temperament, especially when their interests and passions were concerned, vague truths might quickly be distorted into monstrous shapes, had early taught me the value of reserve and silence.

Another advantage which I may flatter myself I possessed, was an innate spirit of order. By virtue of this faculty indeed, my position had been strengthened, long before the reins were placed in my own unwilling hands. The greatest difficulty to be surmounted was the incessant attempt to grasp supremacy on the part of the oft-mentioned clique; and I knew, by the sad experience of Laporte, that, whatever might be the inconveniences of firmness, concession to unjust exigences would infallibly

lead to further encroachments and eventual ruin.

To resume my narrative. Terms were arranged with the assignees of Mr. Chambers for the rental of the theatre until the sale could be completed. The necessary capital was forthcoming, and the season of 1842 opened under my sole direction.

Before entering, however, into the history of my management, it might be well to set in a clearer light the real position which a director of the opera must occupy in England.

It has been already observed, that no assistance is afforded to our theatres by Government. Any one designing to enter upon the management of one, especially of the Italian Opera, has to provide capital, to make advances, and to defray his expenses beforehand, trusting to overtake all by a successful season, or rather by a series of such. The man himself should possess the sort of talent and knowledge adapted to the enterprise, and ought likewise to be endowed with fortitude, hopefulness, patience, and power of self-controul, coupled with strong health and ability to endure fatigue.

Now, supposing a courageous and competent person to present himself in the position of a director, uniting the requisites sketched above, with what feelings do we find him regarded by the theatrical section of the public? The answer will suggest itself to most of those who have had experience of the habits of London society. From the noble Patron and Patroness down to the subscribing Bookseller; from the wealthy Citizen down to the *Modiste*—all frequenters, or would-be frequenters of the opera, entertain a common sentiment of hostility towards "the manager." Most of them grudge giving their money. Each seeks to obtain his amusement by

the least possible outlay. Admissions "gratis" are sought with importunity by those who can set forth the slightest claim to the favour. Artists themselves show no consideration for the director's purse, but clamour for boxes and tickets for friends without limit. Such is the wide-spreading feeling among the opera-going public, on the opening of a new season. No one thinks of the outlay: but everyone calculates the gains. Who ever expresses pleasure at the thought that the manager is making a profit? He is, to speak openly, the "common enemy" in the eyes of both public and artists. The latter feel injured if he reaps the harvest of their labours, and think he ought to pay them higher; the public feel displeasure at the prices required for admission, and argue, that, if the theatre "pays," the tariff ought to be lower. Lastly, the difficulties of the director, when they become notorious, excite no compassion. A few rich noblemen tender a certain amount of support, on the understood condition of being allowed to influence the administration; and when, induced by these flattering hopes of friendly assistance, the manager parts with his independence, he becomes powerless to recover his losses, and finally meets his ruin at the hands of the aristocratic ally, who relentlessly presses for repayment out of an empty treasury.

Indeed, when the enormous expenditure involved in the carrying on of the theatre, its high rent, the heavy rate of insurance against fire, the army of functionaries in its pay, the wear and tear of the "properties," the losses by non-payment of boxes, the vast sums absorbed by the artists—singers, dancers, and orchestra—are all taken into consideration, it is easy to imagine how large must be the receipts which should balance such

outgoings. And be it always borne in mind, that in the case of Italian Opera, the season, properly so called, lasts no more than four or five months out of the twelve.

The principal source whence a director derives support, encouragement, and satisfaction in his career, apart from pecuniary profit, is to be found in the character and behaviour of some of the more distinguished artists, with whom the reputation of the opera has been intimately associated. Very many of the great names, which have illustrated the period of my management, are set down on the list of my attached friends and well-wishers.

Having called attention to the circumstances that might utterly discourage any one disposed to enter upon the position of an opera manager, it will be a more pleasing task to mention the advantages and accidental aids which fell to my lot in addition to the personal qualifications which are enumerated above, and which, I flatter myself, I brought to the services of my enterprize. One of these advantages I must especially mention: the professional education which I had gone through, enabling me to comprehend many legal intricacies which, to a "layman" (as one may say) would have been a hopeless puzzle. Again a distinct view of liabilities, contingencies, risks, and, on the other hand, of prospective privileges and advantages, was brought more clearly within the scope of my vision than was possible in the case of previous managers.

To show that I was not a merely nominal lawyer, but had been sincere in the pursuit of my profession, I may state that, about the time of M. Laporte's death, I published a treatise on "Parliamentary Practice," which

became the standard work on the subject, and which, by shewing, in juxtaposition, the clashing rules of the two Houses with respect to private bills, led to their assimilation. I may add, that my respected friend and tutor, Mr. Basil Montagu, dedicated to me a work which he published on the "Law of Election."

Not to dwell longer upon this point, I will now turn to the social position which I already occupied, and to the friendly consideration shewn towards me by persons of high standing in this country, as well as by distinguished foreigners. Noblemen were not backward in tendering support, and also pecuniary assistance (if such were needed), when it became a question whether I would or would not venture upon the step of taking the opera. And many of the leading men of fashion encouraged me to take it, prompted by the partiality felt for me as the zealous co-adjutor of poor Laporte—now no more. When at length I braced up my courage to the venture, the nobility, headed by a distinguished connoisseur belonging to their order, realized, by rallying round me, the promise which had encouraged my decision.

Not only was a liberal "subscription" entered into for boxes and stalls for the season of 1842, by the aristocracy and gentry, but the list was graced with the names of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, the Queen Dowager, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, besides those of many foreign diplomatists and visitors.

For some years successively, as will presently be seen, the tide of fashion flowed steadily towards the Opera-house, the attractions of which were so splendid and diversified, that the satisfaction of the public manifested itself in every form of eulogy. Many of the "subscribers" personally expressed their approbation of

the manner inwhich both the Opera and Ballet were conducted; whilst, on the Continent the reputation of the theatre rose so high as to cast a reflected lustre upon the manager himself.

I, on my part, feeling grateful to the artists for the immense success, of which, naturally, they were regarded as the chief cause, was in the habit of shewing them personal civilities at my private residence, where many a cheerful hour of unreserved and congenial intercourse, graced by the admixture of accomplished and amiable amateurs of both sexes, was enjoyed by my "prémier sujêts." Once in the summer of each year I likewise gave a fête, on a more extended scale, at the same suburban villa, to which the flower of London society—ladies as well as gentlemen—were invited, together with a large number of "professionals." To these festal entertainments it was always regarded as a privilege to be admitted, and I may venture to assert that no one ever came away from them without feeling gratified with the day's amusement.

My fête was in truth *the* day of the season, with all classes connected with the opera. Artists mingled familiarly with the gay throng, or formed groups in the gardens, whilst many sauntered on the terrace bordering the river—"alive" with boats, eager spectators of the "regatta" going forward on its waters. Ample provision was made for dinner, bands of music played throughout the afternoon, and towards night dancing became general within doors.

To give a list of the guests present at these "réunions" would be to name most of the distinguished members of English and foreign society. Accordingly, the relations which grew up between these guests and

their entertainer, apart from the enjoyment of the society of cultivated and high-bred people, gave a certain importance and consideration to the "Director of Her Majesty's Theatre." Invited to some of the most agreeable country houses, as a staying guest, having also friendly connexions among the middle classes which, in England, it may fairly be said, unite in an eminent degree worth of character with genial kind-heartedness, my position was, altogether, a more enviable and brilliant one than it has usually been the lot of theatrical managers to attain. These exceptional advantages must be ranked among the most pleasing of compensations for the anxieties and vexations to which a director is necessarily subjected.

That it reflected a beneficial *prestige* upon the establishment, is incontestable; and there were not a few occasions in which the interposition of persons of rank and influence in matters of difficulty, such as arise between director and artist, effected the most salutary results. The artist felt flattered that "the noble" should take interest in the concerns of the theatre, and was at the same time made sensible that such interest was in great part referable to an anxiety to maintain me in the management. These "passages" took Her Majesty's Theatre somewhat out of the usual orbit wherein establishments of the kind ordinarily revolve in this country.

Again, as often as I crossed the straits of Dover, I found a ready welcome from those whom we might style "personages," rather than "persons." At the chief cities of Europe, a cordial invitation to dine with ministers, ambassadors, statesmen, and others, was sure to be forthcoming; whilst from the "celebrities" of the

day of the artist class, I equally met with a ready and even flattering reception. Honoured alike in the palace and in the modest abode of the singer, I passed from a pleasant visit to Prince Metternich to the villa of Rubini; from a *tête-à-tête* with the illustrious Count Cavour to a "cosy" talk with the Catalani (a woman as estimable as she was celebrated); from the Tuileries to the dwelling of the composer or the poet. Thus I alternated the pursuit of recruits for my coming season, with the cultivation of my more exalted "relations," to my own sensible advantage and enjoyment.

With such elements of success on my side, it is not to be wondered at that the *éclat* of the establishment in the Haymarket outshone all others, or that the rising aspirants for scenic fame were desirous of trying their fortune upon those boards on which the eminent artists of the period had attained their highest reputation, under the sway of a director of reputed ability to render full justice to artistic merit and power.

CHAPTER IV.

Commencement of the Season of 1842—Subscription Large and Liberally Entered into by Patrons and Booksellers—Engagements Inherited from M. Laporte Renewed—Inability of Madame Grisi to Fulfil Hers—Rapid Journey to Italy in Search of a Prima Donna—Madame Frezzolini Engaged—Embarrassing Relations with the Artists, Consequent on the Former Laxity of M. Laporte's Government—Strong Company Announced for First Season—The Pre-Paschal Season—"Gemma di Vergy"—Guasco—Moltini—Negociation with Donizetti and Romani for a New Opera.

LIKE the first year of most new dynasties, the first year of my operatic reign was destined to be replete with troubles, discontents, intrigues, conspiracies, and rebellions. The sky was throughout tempestuous; the rocks and shoals, sunken as well as visible above the surface of the stormy operatic ocean, were difficult and dangerous to steer through. Nevertheless, favourable omens were not wanting at the outset. The booksellers as well as the subscribers had confidence in the new direction; so that the largest subscription ever known at the opera was forthcoming for the season of 1842. It was not from that quarter that the dangerous squalls arose.

The engagements made by M. Laporte had been terminated by his death. But I hastily renewed the greater number, for whatever might be my own private feelings and inclinations, I had no time to seek out other artists.

At my very starting, however, a serious and unexpected obstacle arose. Only a few weeks previously to the opening of the theatre, on my return from a rapid run to Italy, a mere chance gave me the intimation that Madame Grisi would probably be unable to perform during all the earlier part of the season. At some time in May, or the beginning of June, I was informed—the very period when the services of a principal prima donna would be most indispensably necessary to the fortunes of the establishment—her confinement would preclude even hope of her being available. Upon inquiry, this startling and discouraging piece of information turned out to be true. Not having been warned of this untoward contingency while forming my engagements, I was utterly unprovided with a *prima donna assoluta* fitted for the more strongly dramatic parts of the ordinary *repertoire*, and was for a moment overwhelmed at the discovery.

Happily, I was not a man to be easily daunted; and, in spite of the many important matters requiring my direct superintendence in London, I immediately set out "in hot haste" for Rome, where Madame Frezzolini, whose reputation in the *grand genre* of the lyric drama was considerable, was at that time residing. The lady, whose husband, the tenor Poggi, was then singing at Rome, was herself disengaged, expecting almost daily to become a mother: but early in the London season she might still be available. An engagement was hastily made, and I rapidly returned to England, as active and unwearied as when I started on my outward journey. I may state, as an amusing fact, that, pending this negotiation, I seriously puzzled a great Roman banker, who, finding that a mysterious stranger had been credited with a large amount, was at

his wit's end to divine with what *Principe incognito*, or secret diplomatist, he had to deal: the rather, since I declined his invitation to a banquet on the following day.

"*Ce n'est que le premier pas qui côute*" is a proverb which frequently holds good with respect to mortal exertions. But the *premier pas* was not the only one which was destined to disturb my peace of mind during the first year of my reign. Much confusion was discovered in the terms of various engagements—much more in the several departments of the theatre. The difficulties with many of the artists, whose gradually-acquired supremacy rendered their caprices more tyrannical than ever, were soon found to press upon the new director. The "cold" and "illness" system, which had been of old employed to thwart the existing arrangements and to sustain various jealousies and intrigues, was again resorted to by recalcitrant artists, and that to a degree which occasioned grave inconvenience. For the public—the real public—began at last to resent an apparently arbitrary change in the performances. A description of the struggle against these internal manœuvres, and the fluctuations of success and defeat with which it was attended, must be attempted at this stage of my history.

The list of singers laid before the subscribers in 1842 was, in many respects, most attractive. It contained, among its *prime donne*, the names of Mesdames Persiani, Frezzolini, Moltini, and Ronconi; amongst its tenors those of Rubini (for occasional performances, previous to his retiring from the stage), Mario, Guasco, and Poggi (the husband of Madame Frezzolini); among its baritones and basses, Ronconi, Panzini, the great Lablache, with his son Frederico, and Burdini. Signor

Costa still ruled in the orchestra as the musical director. Only one name, without which no opera company was then supposed to be complete, was absent from the programme. However, no manifestation of displeasure took place. No shouts of "Where's Tamburini?" were heard from men of fashion. Letters from the great baritone, it is true, appeared in the public prints, stating that he was not engaged, and asking why he was thus overlooked; but they failed to create the desired sensation. Indeed, they did not even elicit a rejoinder or an explanation. When Ronconi, who had been engaged as his substitute, appeared, no opposition was offered—no yelling public attempted to "put him down." As will be seen, this justly celebrated artist quickly established himself as a favourite; and the poor martyr of a previous season seemed wholly forgotten. Was it that a fickle public had proved ungrateful? or was it not rather that the prime mover of it was absent from the scene, and that the tactics of the "cabal" had, in this instance, been modified? Completely dissolved it had not been. From time to time it made itself disastrously felt within the walls of the theatre.

At this period it was the custom to give a preliminary opera season before Easter, during which the great "stars," who were then ordinarily engaged in Paris, seldom appeared; inferior, or, at all events, less well-known artists, being usually engaged. This was a sort of foretaste of the richer banquet to be given when the Lenten season was over, and was generally supposed to be less relished than the post-Easter entertainment. The season of 1842, in obedience to this custom, opened on Saturday, the 12th April, with the "Gemma di Vergy" of Donizetti, Madame Moltini appearing for the

first time as the *prima donna*, and Guasco as leading tenor. The choice of the opera, given rather to meet the views of the singers than those of the manager, was by no means felicitous. "Gemma di Vergy," although abounding in melody and effects, both dramatic and musical, was not esteemed one of Donizetti's finer compositions, albeit a favourite opera in many parts of Italy. Donizetti, likewise, had found, up to this time, but slight favour with the English public, or, at all events, with the English press. He occupied, then, in this country, a position similar to that which afterwards fell to the lot of his successor, Verdi; and even among a great portion of the numerous critics, amateurs as well as "professionals," he was pronounced, by many arbiters of taste, "flimsy," "meretricious," "noisy," "unsound," "plagiarist," and so on.

"Gemma" was unquestionably a failure; as, indeed, it would have proved under these prejudices with even stronger claims to approbation. I may take occasion to remark, that a criticism is still extant condemning the "Barbiere di Siviglia," when first represented in England, as utterly "worthless." Rossini is now a classic, but in his early days he was treated with as little respect as Donizetti and Verdi at later periods.

Negociations had been, for some time past, carried on with Donizetti, for the purpose of obtaining from him a new opera, "composed expressly" for Her Majesty's Theatre. Under these circumstances, it was considered highly important to obtain a *libretto* from Felice Romani, the Italian poet, author of the *libretti* of "La Sonnambula," "Anna Bolena," "Norma," "L'Elisir," "Lucrezia," and other successful operas. For some time past Romani had refused the most alluring offers,

and declined to write any other opera-book. Nevertheless I made a journey for the express purpose of seeing him, and, after considerable difficulty, induced him to waive his determination. Donizetti was delighted, and readily undertook to write the music. Romani, however, though he reiterated his promises, never furnished more than a few scenes of his intended opera, the subject of which was "Circe," the principal part being intended for Madame Grisi.

The success of Madame Moltini is a matter of dispute, although she had many advantages, among which were a pleasing person, and a fresh, resonant voice. Guasco, with a fine organ, a good school, a striking person, and sufficient powers of dramatic expression, was more favourably received, although he failed to acquire a permanent position on the Anglo-Italian stage. Indeed, his success may be regarded as far from insignificant, when the influence exercised by Mario and the *vieille garde* at the time is considered. A previous engagement, contracted for the ensuing summer, at Vienna, appears to have been the reason why he did not return to London. I made large offers to M. Merelli, the director of the Italian Opera at that capital, in order to obtain his release; but the Austrian Court, which set much store upon Guasco, refused to permit the ratification of any such arrangement.

Whatever success attended the pre-Easter season, was, in fine, mainly attributable to the ballet.

CHAPTER V.

Season of 1842 (Continued)—The Ballet—"Giselle"—Carlotta Grisi—Persiani—Ronconi's *Début*—Madame Moltini in "Norma"—Mario's Refusal to play *Pollione*—*Début* of Madame Frezzolini—Poggi—"Beatrice di Tenda"—"Lucrezia Borgia"—"Torquato Tasso"—Failure of Madame Ronconi—Dissensions among the Artists—Success of "Le Contatrici Villane."

THERE were days when the *ballet d'action* still maintained a high *prestige* with the opera subscribers, though it was never so popular in England as in the gesticulating South, or even in France. It was not till years afterwards that the Lord Dundrearys of the opera came to regard the ballet as a "something that no fellow could understand;" and to set their faces entirely against all pantomimic action, which, in order to follow "the story," required a slight effort of observation and memory. In fact, these critical gentlemen have now declared all ballet performances, beyond the mere *divertissement*, or string of consecutive dances, "a bore."

I will, however, so far concede a point to the indolent patrons of choreographic art as to admit that even the *ballet d'action* ought to be much more easily intelligible than the generality of plays in which words are employed. The situations should tell their own tale, and that part of the action which merely belongs to the development

of the plot, but is not striking to the eye, should be rendered as subordinate as possible. Hence I am rather inclined to the opinion that a known subject is better adapted for a ballet than one which has to be unravelled for the first time, when presented in dumb-show. Had the Dundrearys to whom I refer merely objected to obscure ballets, their objection would have been sound enough; but they would have the *divertissement*, and nothing else. Accepting the risk of telling people what they already know, I will venture to explain that the term *ballet d'action* belongs to ballets with a developed plot and more or less of pantomimic action, whereas in the *divertissement*, the story, if such it can be called, is a mere pretext for the introduction of dances.

The charming ballet, "Giselle," with the truly captivating music of Adolphe Adam, was produced on the opening night of 1842. Carlotta Grisi, not absolutely unknown here, but now entitled for the first time to touch the highest position, and her clever, agile husband, Perrot, were the prominent artists in the entertainment. A Mademoiselle Fleury, new to England, added to the excellent effect of the *ensemble* as the *Queen of the Wilis*. The anti-pantomimic malcontents not having yet assumed the position of a fashionable faction, the "story" was admitted to be "vastly pretty." "Giselle" was pronounced a success, and the production of this ballet may be regarded as the main element of attraction on the opening of my first season. Its success was probably owing to the fact of the whole story being comprised within the limits of a short romantic legend, which, in the hands of a skilful "Mime," becomes easily intelligible. The original story was borrowed by Théophile Gautier from Henri Heine,

the well-known German poet, to whom I shall afterwards have occasion to refer.

What was at that time designated the "real" season, should have been inaugurated by the first appearance of Madame Persiani, now at the height of her popularity. But it would seem that for an instant the demon of disaster hovered over Her Majesty's Theatre. Persiani was announced for Tuesday, the 5th April; but, at the last moment, a hand-bill informed the entering crowd that the expected favourite had suffered too much from sea-sickness on her passage from Calais to Dover, to be able to sing. The disappointed public was not to be pacified with a *pot pourri* from "Gemma" and "Il Giuramento," with Guasco and Moltini, but expressed its dissatisfaction with clamour and hissing. The "check" was unfortunate to a season destined to realize in many respects the sanguine presages with which it commenced. The following Saturday, however, brought forward not only Persiani, but Giorgio Ronconi, who made his *début* before an English public as the *Enrico* of the "Lucia de Lammermoor," a part not well suited to the display of his talents. Hence his *début* was not so completely successful as his second performance soon after in "Beatrice di Tenda," which proved so excellent, that it established him at once a favourite on the Anglo-Italian boards, and put to rest all demands for the return of Tamburini.

"Lucia," on the whole admirably cast, and the "Elisir d'Amore," with Persiani, Lablache, Ronconi, and Mario, appeared for a few nights to have dispelled the thunder-clouds that hung over the opera; but for a few nights only, inasmuch as the "cold and illness" system was soon found to be again at work; and, on the announcement of the "indisposition" of both Per-

siani and Guasco, the change of performance thus necessitated brought forward fresh, or rather smouldering, elements of discord. The opera of "Norma" was hastily substituted, with Madame Moltini as the *prima donna* of the night.

Signor Mario, who had already sung the part of *Pollione* in Paris, was, naturally, called upon to resume his position in that opera. But Signor Mario refused so to do. He was appealed to as "an artist, and as a gentleman," to assist the manager under the embarrassment of the occasion. He still declined. A sore throat was then urged as the pretext of his refusal, and rival doctors published on the morrow advertisements respectively asserting and denying his inability to sing.

The difficulty of the "situation" being great, I wrote to Signor Mario, entreating him, if he could not sing, at least to appear, in order to propitiate the public by this demonstration of his good-will. The tenor's answer was, that he was engaged to *sing* and not to *appear*. When at last another tenor was substituted, and already dressed for the part, Signor Mario (who by this time had probably been made aware of the false position in which he was placing himself) appeared in the theatre, to the astonishment of the manager, and declared himself, in inverted phrase, ready to *appear* but not to *sing*. It was then too late.

In point of fact, Signor Mario refused to sing *Pollione* with any other *Norma* than Madame Grisi, and his refusal seemed particularly unreasonable, as the lady in question was at this time unable to perform. The denunciations against him were heavy. Scarcely a London newspaper refrained from attacking the recalcitrant tenor in explicit, not to say harsh, terms. A short paper

war ensued, in which the gentleman was utterly defeated.

When Signor Mario again offered his services, the management declared that he had violated the articles of his engagement; and although, at this juncture, the late Duke of Beaufort volunteered his aid as peace-maker, the negociation—amongst the conditions of which, on my part, was one to the effect that the tenor should resume his part of "Pollione"—was unsuccessful. My conduct in the whole business obtained, however, the entire approval of the Duke, who moreover, explained the truth of the affair in influential quarters, where a disposition to look very favourably on the singer might have been detrimental to my interests. Thus, Signor Mario disappeared from the programme of the opera for the rest of the season, and it was as well for himself, perhaps, that he did so, for the tide of popular opinion was strong against him. This *coup* on the part of the management was among the first blows struck at the attempted supremacy of the artists over the director.

Under these circumstances, one of the greatest excitements of the season was undoubtedly the *début* of Madame Frezzolini. For some years she had held the proud position of the most celebrated *prima donna* on the lyric stage in Italy. Her advent was naturally heralded by many a flourish of trumpets, not one of which, perhaps, was louder than her great reputation merited. Italy had proclaimed her "the first among the first." There was nothing, therefore, which in the slightest degree savoured of "humbug" in the "puff preliminary." She was not only a great singer and a great actress; she was, moreover, a fine woman. Italy was enthusiastic about her—why should not England be

so likewise? As it turned out, Madame Frezzolini was received in England with favour, but not with enthusiasm. At all events, her success did not reach the point anticipated. This result may be ascribed to the fact, that her health had suffered greatly, not only from her recent confinement, but from cold and privations endured in one of the houses of refuge on Mount Cenis, where she had been sheltered during a storm for nearly three whole days. Jarring discords between herself and her husband, Signor Poggi (which terminated shortly afterwards in a separation), and consequent distress of mind, contributed likewise to deteriorate a voice which had been pre-eminently beautiful when heard a few months previously. The mind and "school" of the great artist were no longer adequately seconded by her physical powers. The fine intention still remained; but the full means for consummate execution were wanting. As it was, when the influence of the *vieille garde* and its numerous adherents, as well as the conservative tendency of the English public, are taken into account, it is manifest that the really great talent of Madame Frezzolini alone enabled her to maintain such a position as she actually did acquire.

She achieved, however, notwithstanding these untoward circumstances, many a legitimate triumph during the season.

Her first appearance was made in "Beatrice di Tenda," an opera which, although it contains some of Bellini's sweetest melodies, and was supported on this occasion by both Ronconi and Guasco, failed to make a very favourable impression.

The *libretto* of "Beatrice di Tenda," dark, lugubrious, and painful, is in itself calculated to impress an English

audience unfavourably. Nevertheless, in this opera, Ronconi completely established himself, both as singer and actor. Poggi, who had unwisely refused the tenor part, writhed with jealousy to hear Guasco invariably encored in the "Io Soffrü," a melody which, it may be noticed, bears a considerable resemblance to the tender composition by Reissiger, known as "Weber's last Waltz."

The greatest success of the gifted *prima donna* was achieved in "Lucrezia Borgia," with her husband Poggi, who like herself was received with favour, although never with any great enthusiasm.

There is no doubt that Poggi's dress detracted, in some degree, from his success; the recollection of Mario's admirable costume in the same part leading to unfavourable comparisons.

Immediately following upon Madame Frezzolini, however, came a decided failure in the person of Madame Ronconi, for whose *début* "Torquato Tasso" was produced. Unfortunately, Signor Ronconi (as rumour said, and for once, it may be affirmed, with singular correctness) was not allowed, by "Caudle" treaty, to play this great character with any other *prima donna* than his *sposa*.

The part of *Leonora*, in "Torquato Tasso," had been intended by me for Madame Moltini; but on this same part Madame Ronconi had set her heart, and in this pretension the compliant husband supported her. I was compelled to yield the point, in return for concessions made on the side of Ronconi. Noble intervention was employed, nay, a dinner was given for the purpose of settling the mighty difference. The gratification of the lady's desire, however, produced the very reverse of the

anticipated result. Madame Ronconi not only failed herself, but rendered her husband, who was thinking more of her than his own effects, so nervous, that he was unable to obtain, in his favourite part, that success which he might otherwise have achieved.

Accordingly, "Torquato Tasso," in spite of the undeniable greatness of the accomplished baritone in the principal part, failed to make any good impression. Other circumstances connected with the "cast," apart from the fatal drawback of this lady's exigencies, contributed to deprive the opera of every chance of becoming a favorite on the London boards. Discord was, just then, prevalent in every department of the establishment. My first struggle in my operatic rule was heavy. I wrestled on, and, sharp as proved the contest, was not "thrown," although I may have staggered on my feet.

It was about this period that various rumours of the *coulisses* filtered through into the public ear, and that the newspapers of the day began to contain references to the differences behind the scenes. One journal contained a concise and striking phrase, with reference to the composition of the company. "There seems a principle of *repulsion* among its elements." "There are jealousies, feuds, and intrigues going on in the scenic holes and corners of every theatre," said another paper, "but nowhere to such an extent as at the Italian Opera. There Madame G. protests against playing in the same piece with Signor H.; and Signor D. gives notice that he will be ill if Madlle. K. be permitted to sing in the same opera with him. Signora L. must have Signor M., and no one else, to play with her; and, to crown all, the *prima donna* has a cold, sore

throat, fever, spasms, and 'the thousand ills that flesh is heir to,' and cannot sing in the advertised opera. All these germs of rebellion, sprouting forth under one roof, at the same moment, would perplex an old manager, and are enough to drive a new one mad." A third writer spoke out yet more plainly. "Ronconi and Frezzolini are at loggerheads, and won't meet at rehearsal. Grisi refuses to allow anybody else the use of *her Pollione*. Poor Moltini has unconsciously offended Persiani, by singing so well last Thursday, when *she* could not. Madame Ronconi vows that her *caro sposo* shall not play his favourite part in 'Torquato Tasso,' unless *she* herself personates his adored *Leonora*; and Signor Poggi cannot sing in the 'Bravo,' which requires two tenors, because the other gentleman of the establishment refuses to 'play second fiddle.'" One who seems to comprehend the true situation of affairs, and the original foundation of all the intrigues and cabals, writes (somewhat prematurely) in the following strain: "The knell of the 'Old Guard' has tolled. Secure in their fancied might, the Grisi, the Tamburini, and even the Mario, bound the administration, as mere helots, to the wheels of their car of victory. Surrounded by a halo of false brilliancy, and strong in their sole possession of the public, they grew into feverish independence. No new talent was suffered to move in the same orbit, or derange their planetary system. Their strength lies in their unity; one stick of the bundle removed—and lo! their power is scattered!" Thus prophesied the scribe. But their power was *not yet* scattered, although resolutely withstood. The final struggle, which led to secession, was still to come.

Under the above-mentioned disadvantages, however,

the management held on its course, and fought the battle perseveringly. The "Cantatrici Villane" of Fioravanti was given, with Lablache and his son, while Frezzolini and Persiani appeared in rival competition, the former artist showing her good feeling, as well as her acquaintance with the old school, by undertaking a part of minor importance. The revival was a "hit." It certainly would have been hard, when "the modern" was so unwillingly accepted, if "the old-fashioned" had not found favour with the exclusive worshippers of the past. Guy Stephan, in a new ballet, called "La Fiancée," but more especially Cerito, in "L'Elève de l'Amour," gave additional spirit to the programme of the season. The latter exquisite *danseuse* was popularly said to possess the power of calming down all the contending elements by one *rond de jambes*.

CHAPTER VI.

Season of 1842 (Continued)—Visit of the Queen to the Opera after the Attempt upon her Life—Enthusiasm displayed by Audience—Grandeur of the real "Spectacle"—Second Engagement of Mademoiselle Rachel at Her Majesty's Theatre—Her Success in "Les Horaces"—American Anecdote—Reappearance of Rubini—Undiminished Popularity of this Singer—The "Stabat Mater" of Rossini given, with great power, at Her Majesty's Theatre—Ballet of "Alma," with Signor Costa's Music, Successful—Illness of Madame Persiani—Dissatisfaction of the Audience at the Change of Performance—Tumultuous Uproar—The Opera not allowed to Proceed—The Ballet alone given—Efforts of the Manager to Ensure the Performance of the Operas announced—Farewell of Rubini—Close of the Season of 1842.

On the 26th May, 1842, the great ball, given for the relief of the distress among the Spitalfields weavers, took place at the opera; but splendid as were the glories of this *fête*, in which Royalty took a prominent part, and much as it absorbed public attention at the time, the record of its brilliancy does not properly belong to a history of the management of Her Majesty's Theatre. Far more interesting in its way, although still not directly connected with the subject, was the appearance of the Queen in the theatre on the 31st May, being the evening after an insane attempt upon her life. The visit of Her Majesty had been expected. The opera house was filled in every part to overflowing; and on

the entrance of the Queen the expression of enthusiasm was electrical. The whole audience rose to its feet, and one loud deep burst of congratulatory applause burst forth from the vast concourse of human beings. Hats and handkerchiefs were waved. Many ladies sobbed aloud. During this demonstration the Queen stood at the front of her box and curtsied repeatedly, while Prince Albert bowed in reply to the deafening congratulations. The audience would not allow the opera to proceed till the "National Anthem" had been sung, and, as a mark of especial respect, Lablache and Persiani joined the rest of the company. At the words "Scatter her enemies," in particular, the most deafening acclamations arose, and one cheer more was raised when Her Majesty resumed her seat in the corner of the box.

On this memorable evening, Mercadante's opera, "Elena Uberti" was performed for the first time in Italian, an English version, entitled "Elena di Feltre," having been produced some time back at Covent Garden Theatre, during the engagement of Miss Adelaide Kemble. The principal character was sustained by Frezzolini, but it made no remarkable sensation. Soon afterwards there were a few performances of the "Barbiere," in which Ronconi roused his usually lukewarm hearers to something bordering upon enthusiasm by his characteristic acting in the small part of *Don Basilio*. He ought, unquestionably, to have played *Figaro*, and complaints were made to the management on the subject, but *Figaro* had been given to Federico Lablache (who had already sung the part in Paris), in consequence of a promise made to his father to that effect.

To these succeeded the long-announced performances

of Mademoiselle Rachel, given on the "off" nights. This was the second appearance of this remarkable artist in England. During the previous season, the enthusiasm she had excited among the higher circles had been intense. She had been favoured by Royalty, courted and flattered by the aristocracy, made the great Lioness of the season by society. Her renewed visit, therefore, to the capital of *la perfide Albion*, where, though she had first approached it with some fear and repugnance, she had been gloriously received, was now hailed as one of the great events of the season.

It would be scarcely justifiable to enter here into details of the career of this gifted woman. If less courted during this second season by the high and exclusive, she was received by the general public with even greater triumph than on the previous occasion. Fashion had then determined her artistic position; and the ukase of fashion was, in this instance, founded on the highest truth and justice. The engagement was brilliant, and, I may add, remunerative; while my social relations with the remarkable artist were of the pleasantest kind, and remained so all through her few remaining years of existence. The spirit of exaction and rapacity of which she has been so frequently accused, was certainly never obtruded upon the English manager. Supported by an efficient company, among which was the elegant and accomplished Mademoiselle Rabut (now Madame Fechter), Mademoiselle Rachel found means to add to her great fame in a country where not even a confirmation of her previous reputation had been expected.

Her first appearance was on the 10th June, 1842, in "Les Horaces," a tragedy in which her powers were

best capable of producing a marked and striking effect, inasmuch as the expectation of the audience was kept in suspense during three acts, to be kindled into an enthusiasm amounting to frenzy by the grand burst of declamation in the fourth. After this first performance—skilfully selected to lead on the public mind—every night brought triumph to Mademoiselle Rachel. In "Bajazet," in "Andromaque," in "Marie Stuart," she electrified the house; and even in the monotonous "Ariâne," of Thomas Corneille, and the dull "Tancrède," of Voltaire, she worked up her audience by the force of her impersonations to a state of frantic admiration. Great indeed must have been the power of this young actress to have not only reconciled the English taste to the uncongenial classicalities of French "legitimate" tragedy, but to have produced in her audience a positive enthusiasm.

It is a genuine fact, that many ladies fainted from emotion during these representations. One was carried insensible from the theatre, in spite of all efforts to recover her. On this circumstance being told to an American manager, he exclaimed, "Oh! that's nothing! She ought to have died in the theatre! The effect would have been tremendous! What a good puff lost!"

The humble origin of Mademoiselle Rachel is well known, but few perhaps are aware that she had not received in her youth the commonest rudiments of education, and that she taught herself writing merely by copying the manuscript of others. On her first introduction into high society she was greatly embarrassed by the conventions of the table, and the question that once arose in her mind, at a grand dinner, as to the

proper use of the knife and fork in the consumption of asparagus, was infinitely embarrassing.

Six years afterwards, when France was in the middle of the excitement caused by the revolution of 1848, Mademoiselle Rachel, it will be remembered, created a furore by singing the "Marseillaise," at the Théatre Français, attired as the allegorical figure of Liberty. She subsequently told me that she took her attitude from the figure of Liberty among the victories on the Arc de Triomphe, in the Champs Elysées.

And here I may remark, upon Rachel's manner of draping her person, in antique character, that she seemed to wear garments which had not been prepared by a sempstress, but which adapted themselves to the figure, just as though they had been thrown over the person by the wearer. Her appearance was indeed conformable in all respects to the ideal of the antique.

The next great event, and one which brought my first season through all its difficulties and dangers to a successful conclusion, was the re-appearance of the great tenor Rubini. He was announced for a imited number of nights only, previous to his final retirement from the stage. The intense desire to hear the last notes of this long-established favorite of the frequenters of the opera, brought crowded houses, during every one of his performances, which commenced on the 13th of June, until the end of the season. In the "Sonnambula," in "Don Giovanni," in the "Puritani," in the "Matrimonio Segreto," in "Anna Bolena," in "Otello," in "Cosi Fan Tutti," and in his favourite air from the "Pirata" (given on the nights when he did not appear in a whole opera), sung with an embroidery as delicate as Mechlin lace—in all these parts he was listened

to with rapture, up to his final farewell. The public prints of the day tell, night by night, the same tale of "overcrowded and fashionable audiences," and of "tumultuous applause."

At this time negociations were on foot to induce Duprez, then in the height of his popularity, to appear on the same night, and even in the same opera, with the favourite Italian. But this curious suggestion never reached a satisfactory realization.

When I state that Duprez was desirous of appearing as *Otello* and had conceived the hope that Rubini might be induced to sing "Rodrigo," the reason why the negociation failed will be obvious enough.

The production of the "Stabat Mater," of Rossini, certainly was not absolutely new to this country, but it was given with a "cast" combining all the great talent at my disposal, and proved, in spite of sundry preliminary "carpings and cavillings," a successful speculation to the management. And so was the revival of Mozart's "Cosi Fan Tutti," thanks to the support of the "Classicists."

The pretty ballet of "Alma" (the music of which was by Costa), enabled the favourite Cerito to display her most alluring graces, as a *danseuse*; and thus the majestic bark of Her Majesty's Theatre seemed to be floating down the agitated stream towards its haven of rest, with favouring breezes, and with gilded banners.

It was the talent displayed by Perrot in the composition and execution of the *pas de fascination* in this ballet, which induced me to fix on him as my future "Maitre de Ballet." Cerito, although a charming dancer, had no great talent as a pantomimic artist; and M. Deshayes had been requested to arrange her part

accordingly—the principal pantomimic action falling to the lot of Perrot. Certainly it was the *pas de trois* in "Alma" which raised to its height what the colder spirits of the time were pleased to call the *Cerito-mania*. There is nothing, indeed, at the present day that can be compared with the almost frenzied enthusiasm which a popular *danseuse* could create twenty years ago.

Towards the close of my voyage, however, it became apparent that my course was not destined to terminate without a "squall." In the history of my management this must have its page of record, inasmuch as it has an intimate connexion with circumstances already narrated, as well as with important events yet in store.

On Saturday, the 25th June, Madame Persiani was announced to make her appearance in the "Puritani." But at a late hour the favourite *prima donna* sent word to the theatre that she was too ill to be able to sing. The illness appears on this occasion to have been a real one, and not the mere indisposition of intrigue. Some time passed in verifying the actual state of the case, and it was only a very few minutes before the opening of the doors that a genuine medical certificate could be posted at all the entrances, giving assurance of the inability of the lady to appear, together with an announcement of the necessity of changing the opera to "Beatrice di Tenda," with Madame Frezzolini. The house was crowded, and at the very commencement of the evening the disappointed public began to give vent to its annoyance by hissing and hooting. This time it was the genuine public which had taken the initiative:—having been so often cheated of their expected evening's entertainment by the caprices, the cabals, and the ill-humours of the artists, they now gave way at last to

strong manifestations of displeasure, pouring, of course, the vials of wrath on the head of the management. The public had learned a lesson from that egregious comedy, got up by a cabal, in the previous year, the "Tamburini Row," and had learned that lesson so as to "better the instruction."

For two long hours and more the hissing and yelling continued. In vain the opera was several times commenced; in vain Rubini appeared as a peace-maker, offering to sing the favourite "Vivi Tu." In vain; after a futile attempt of M. Laurent, the stage-manager, to address the audience in French—a proceeding which only increased the fearful storm—I myself, as the manager, came forward, and offered the truth in the way of explanation. In vain I urged, as far as my voice could be heard in the din of tempest, that it was not fair that when I was tumultuously called to give an explanation the explanation was not to be heard—that "health and sickness were not in my hands." Nothing could calm the outraged public; the storm "waxed fast and furious." Many ladies left the house in terror. The Queen, who, it was stated, had intended to visit the opera, was informed by messenger of the tumult, and did not leave the palace. The greater part of the evening passed before I could make the audience understand that the money would be returned at the doors to those who felt themselves aggrieved. This announcement at last pacified the malcontents; but it was now too late to allow the performance to proceed. No opera was performed at all! Cerito appeared once more as the good genius to quell the storm: and the ballet alone was at length given, without any further opposition.

Such was one of the results of the long series of cabals

and hindrances on the part of the artists, by which, during the season, the management had been tampered with and tyrannised and the public set at naught. Such was the final *coup* which led the management to the resolution that *côute qu'il côute*, the fatal "cold" and "illness" system should by any means be done away with, under the new direction. Illnesses, be it understood, were not confined to the *vieille garde*. Ronconi was continually afflicted with an *abassamento di voce* by superior command, when his female counsellor fretted under the mortification of not being allowed to sing. One afternoon, not long before the performance, when Ronconi had written to say that one of these *abassamenti* prevented his singing, I visited him with the physician. The singer expressed his regrets in a hollow whisper. But Ronconi's consummate powers as an actor were not unknown to me, and I naturally doubted the reality of this whispering performance. Affecting to be its dupe, however, I proceeded to talk upon a topic which I knew would greatly interest the supposed invalid. In a moment Ronconi warmed up; the feigned voice was forgotten: and the wonted tones burst forth in the animation of the discourse. Caught in the fact, the singer ascribed his marvellous recovery to the mere presence of the doctor. He sang that night, and with more than usual vigour. The *abassamenti*, it was found, generally occurred when Ronconi was cast to sing with Frezzolini, whom his wife detested.

By such and similar means, which I eventually adopted to terminate abuses of this description, a change of performance became in after seasons a rarity and an exception, instead of being the chronic habit of operatic proceedings in the Haymarket.

It may be mentioned by way of completing the record, that "Anna Bolena," with Frezzolini, and "Roberto Devereux," with Moltini, were given this year without creating any marked sensation, although the former lady raised herself considerably in public estimation by her impersonation of her part; and that with the "farewell" of Signor Rubini—whose last appearances drew overflowing houses—the chequered season of 1842—the first of my management—came to a close.

Upon the whole, the season might be pronounced successful and satisfactory. Of one result there could be no doubt—I made head against the difficulties which surrounded my first experiment, so as to earn the good will and confidence of the subscribers, and establish my future position with the public. That the bark had not been wrecked among the rocks and quicksands of the enterprise seemed a wonder. That it reached port in safety was almost equivalent to a triumph.

CHAPTER VII.

Auspicious Dawn of the Season of 1843—The Discordant Elements within the Walls Calmed Down through the Agency of Lablache—Strength of the Company—The Ballet—Splendour of its Composition—Rentrée of Fanny Ellsler—Dissatisfaction of the Vocalists at the Prominence given to the Ballet—Its Distant Consequences Adverted to—The "House" Newly Decorated for the Season of 1843—Opening of the Season in March—"Fops' Alley"—Its Ancient Character Described—Success of Adèle Dumilâtre—Début of Fornasari—His Success in the "Belisario" of Donizetti—Rentrée of Madame Grisi and Mario after Easter—"Semiramide"—Brambilla—Production of "Linda di Chamouni" and "Don Pasquale."

OVERCHARGED with stormy clouds as had been the whole horizon during my first season, that of 1843 appears to have commenced and progressed with a brilliant sun shining down on the fortunes of Her Majesty's Theatre. That there were occasional showers and even squalls was no more than I might have expected, glorious as may have been the "summer skies" of fortune. They were but passing storms, however, only serving to clear the air after their occurrence.

The epoch when the events to be recorded are but few, is generally a happy one in history. A government is assumed to be prosperous when its annals are scanty, and wanting in stirring interest. Keeping to the steady and satisfactory tenor of its way, the season of 1843 offers little of salient incident to be noted here.

It may then be considered as fortunate, and there is no doubt that in all essential respects it was so.

Nothing certainly could be more cheering than the auspices under which the doors of the theatre opened once more to the public. The phalanx of artists in every department presented an imposing show in the programme of the coming season. Feuds and dissensions were in abeyance for a time. Madame Grisi, the favourite of past seasons, whose absence in the previous year had been regretted (although the circumstances attending that absence were looked upon with an indulgent eye), appeared at the head of the list—the disagreement of last season with her and Mario having been smoothed over through the intervention of Lablache. Madame Persiani, another of the most popular singers of the time, retained her place. Madame Moltini—who, although she never seems to have attained any high pitch of popularity, was admired by a large class of opera-goers for her beauty and the quality of her voice—figured also on the programme.

The place of contralto was ably filled by Madame Brambilla, always welcome as the best singer of her class then on the boards. All shortcomings of the previous season were to be forgiven. Signor Mario, who figured as one of the leading tenors, and Signor Conti, who enjoyed a great continental reputation as a "tenore di forza," and had been long a popular favourite at Madrid, was announced as the other tenor for "the lead." Rubini had disappeared from the boards, and was not to be lured from his retirement. Tamburini, no longer figured in the announcements; he seems to have been little thought of, and less regretted, notwithstanding all the clamours of the past. Ronconi was

no longer among the *élus*. He had established himself as a favourite during the previous season, and why he was not re-engaged did not so very clearly appear. Popular report pointed at hindrances, arising from the "Caudle" treaty referred to in the last chapter, and at considerable opposition on the part of "Madame," whose failure in the previous season entirely precluded all idea of her being again enlisted; and popular rumour was for once correct. In the place of *basso cantante*, now vacant, Signor Fornasari was promised to the subscribers—a singer of colossal reputation, acquired in Italy; and the great Lablache, with his son Federico, and Panzini, completed the list of principal singers. Satisfactory, and in many respects brilliant as was the promise implied in the publication of these names, the prospects of the ballet were more brilliant still.

As I have before remarked, these were days when the ballet held a far higher position in the estimation of the frequenters of the opera-house than it does at present. Many persons of rank and fashion, had they been frank enough to avow their opinion openly, would emphatically have declared that they looked forward to the ballet as *the* great attraction of the season. Modern opera-goers can form but little idea of the eagerness with which the list of *danseuses* was scanned, or of the "sensation" excited by a new dancer or a new ballet. Those who cater for Her Majesty's Theatre are still necessitated to maintain, to a certain extent, the *prestige* of ancient days, but the pristine glories of the ballet are departed.

In the season of 1843, the promised list contained the names of Fanny Ellsler, the great *danseuse* and equally great pantomimist—the only artist of the century, per-

haps, who combined in so striking a degree the two talents of actress and dancer; of Cerito, the charming; and of Adèle Dumilâtre, the incarnation of grace, who was to make her first appearance in England. Along with these was Guy Stephan, who struggled hard to maintain her place by the side of her more distinguished compeers, with a host of other attractive dancers. Mademoiselle Taglioni—*the* Taglioni—also figured among the possible comers. But, for some reason or other, this promise was not fulfilled. The days of the great combination afterwards known and talked of, the famous *pás de quatre*, were still to come.

Perrot, one of the most popular dancers who ever sprang upon the English boards, and Saint-Léon, an accomplished violinist as well as dancer, were also announced, along with a number of pantomimists. The most enticing choreographic banquet was promised in this "bill of fare," and the ballet of the season accordingly proved one of the richest treats ever provided for the subscribers and the public. The preference shown to this portion of the entertainments at Her Majesty's Theatre rankled doubtless in the minds of many operatic artists. It was destined, ere many years, to form one of the most notable subjects of discontent, and to constitute one of the cogent causes of the great rupture which actually did ensue.

During the recess the theatre had been entirely renovated and redecorated, and on Saturday the 11th of March it reopened, with considerable *éclat*. I had been fortunate enough to provide more satisfactorily than usual for the pre-Easter campaign. An arrangement had been made with the director of the Paris Italian Opera, and Madame Persiani was secured as a

star for the opening nights of the season. Conti, the tenor, of whom much was expected, was also announced; and in a short time Fornasari, heralded by all the trumpets of Italy as the king of *bassi*, was to make his appearance. For the opening of the season, also, Fanny Ellsler was to arrive, she having lately terminated her triumphant career in America; and the *début* of Adèle Dumilâtre, whose Parisian reputation was great, added to the attractions of the usually dull Lenten entertainment, and created quite a thrill of expectation among the frequenters of "Fops' Alley." Never was the preliminary season looked forward to with more impatience, so unusual was a programme containing such a display of talent at that season of the year.

It may not be out of place, before proceeding with the history of the season of the year 1843, to give a brief notice of this same "Fops' Alley" just casually mentioned. The "Fops' Alley" is now among the traditions of the past, and younger opera-goers, among the male sex especially, may feel some interest in a description of a locality which was not unjustly reckoned among the prominent features of the opera, when the Italian Opera House stood alone.

In those days the pit was extensive; the stalls, originally introduced by M. Laporte, being comparatively few in number. From an entrance, occupying the centre of the lowest tier of boxes, a few steps descended to the back of the pit, down the centre of which a broad space was left unencumbered to within a few feet of the orchestra. This formed the renowned "Fops' Alley," the time-honoured celebrity of which I so much respected that, waving considerations of personal advantage, I objected to increase the number of the stalls.

Ample room was left also between the pit seats and the boxes on the pit tier, and thus there was space allowing the *habitués* to lounge about at their leisure.

Fops' Alley, as the name implied, was an ancient institution. The very term "Fop" had already become extinct in the earliest days of my management. The "Dandy" was all but antiquated, while the "Swell" had not yet risen to his recent supremacy. But no matter for the designation, the meaning of the term was fully understood and admitted as a generally recognised reality. It was the practice of the day for all the more "exquisite" and fashionable of the male operatic patrons to quit their boxes or their scanty stalls during various portions of the performance, and to fill the vacant spaces in the centre and sides of the pit, where they could laugh, lounge, chatter, eye the boxes from convenient vantage points, and likewise criticise and applaud in common. The "meetings and greetings" that took place in the pit of the opera were looked upon as an essential portion of the evening's entertainment. All that was aristocratic, distinguished, fashionable, or (still more) would-be fashionable, met, swarmed, greeted, babbled in an ever-seething, ever-varying crowd. Many of the young "exquisites" of that period have since disappeared from the arena of the world as from that of the opera; many others have fallen into "the sere and yellow leaf," and have been elbowed from their thrones by impertinently handsome young "Dundrearys" of a later day. But the living heroes of the past may have the consolation of knowing that modern "Fops" possess no longer this special ground whereon to display their social importance. Fops' Alley is no more.

On Saturday the 11th March, then, the season of 1843

opened—and opened brilliantly, in spite of the questionable choice of the opera of the night. The "Adelia" of Donizetti had been selected for the reappearance of Persiani and the *début* of Conti. "Adelia" had never been accounted one of the most esteemed operas of the prolific composer, even in Italy. With the anti-Donizetti feeling strong in England (the bigoted lovers of the old school having just then no one else to abuse, in default of the Verdi, who was yet to come), the choice was, as all must admit, hazardous. The opera, in a musical point of view, was not a success; although the remarkable execution of Persiani, who was enabled to show all her grace and flexibility in a *rondo* at the conclusion, "brought down the curtain" with applause. Conti was received as a steady, zealous, and even energetic tenor, but failed to excite any marked enthusiasm, or to realise the high expectations of the public. "Far more interesting than the opera," said journals of the day, "was the *divertissement* of 'L'Aurore,' which introduced to this country Mademoiselle Adèle Dumilâtre." The *debutante* achieved a triumph, and was declared one of the effective representatives of the "ideal" school of dancing (of which Taglioni was the head), in contradistinction to the "realistic" school of Cerito and others.

Unfortunately, an accident which happened to Perrot on the opening night, in a *pas de deux* with the new *danseuse*, somewhat marred the completeness of the performance. But the success of Dumilâtre was decided.

On the very same evening, Fanny Ellsler made her reappearance in the sprightly ballet of the "Tarentule." It was in a ballet like this—a ballet with an interesting story and a simply constructed plot—a ballet

affording opportunities to the actress as well as the dancer, that this great artist shone. Not that her "Tarantule" permitted to her so fine a display of acting as did her "Gipsy"* for instance, with its original powerfully tragic *dénouement.* But her exquisitely keen sense of humour, tempered by truth and grace, had in this ballet excellent occasion to reveal itself. Although, as already observed, these were times when a ballet with something like a plot was not considered a nuisance and a "bore," the production of a *ballet d'action* and a *divertissement* both on one evening, each with such an abundant display of talent, will perhaps appear extraordinary. I should explain that Fanny Ellsler had disputed the authority of her agent, so that it was uncertain whether she could come to London. I had therefore secured the appearance of Adèle Dumilâtre, that my house might not open without a first-rate *danseuse.* Fanny Ellsler coming after all, I found myself somewhat blessed with an *embarras de richesses.*

The programme of the first night, in spite of the listlessness with which the opera of "Adelia" was received, continued, with some slight variations in the ballet department, until the *début* of Fornasari on the 25th of March.

It is a very difficult task to enter upon the subject of this once admired basso. His first appearance in Donizetti's "Belisario" was justly hailed with rapture. Day after day the critical notices of the press teemed with eulogiums of the strongest kind. The unanimity of the critics was wonderful. Nothing was to be seen but the most abundant praise of his "admirable voice," his

* The story of the Gipsy is embodied in the *libretto* of M. Balfe's popular opera, the "Bohemian Girl."

"perfect execution," his "great dramatic genius," his "wonderfully handsome person." No such *début* had been witnessed, they all assured the world, in the memory of man; and points in acting were noted as traits of noble genius, of which the artist himself was ignōrant. Words of sufficient superlative import could scarcely be found to proclaim his triumph. He was "the great success of a successful season."

So spoke the almost unanimous voice of the press, and I am bound to admit that the success of Fornasari in "Belisario," and some other parts, was unquestionably great. His looks, stature, costume, and "make up," rendered him the *beau idéal* of the victorious Roman General in the first act. No painter could have represented a personage more admirably calculated to satisfy the imagination and secure the sympathies of the spectator. As soon as he appeared the audience seemed struck as by an electric shock, and a genuine burst of applause, speedily warming into enthusiasm, recognised and welcomed the artist. I may here mention that the Duchess of Cambridge, one of the leading patronesses of the opera, expressed to me her profound admiration of Fornasari's performance, as well as the present Duke, then "Prince George," who evinced his astonishment that so great an artist could have existed without being generally known in England.

There can be no doubt that his first part, *Belisario*, was also his best; but it was long before the press was able to recede from the storm of popularity it had somewhat prematurely raised, and slow were the critics to find any drawback to the worship of the idol they had set up. In time, however, the tumult of laudation settled down to a calmer appreciation of Fornasari's real

merits. It is enough for the purposes of this history of a management to record that the engagement of this singer in 1843 was one of the great "hits" of the season. It brought the manager a rich harvest, the result of his fortunate appreciation of the popular taste.

With the exception of two performances of "La Sonnambula," in which Mario made his reappearance, *Belisario* occupied with great *éclat* the remaining early season, and never had Lenten operatics been so successful a speculation to any previous manager. To Mario the past had been forgiven. He was universally declared to have gained sensibly in "finish" and style; and from his reappearance may be dated the commencement of that confirmed and undisputed popularity which he afterwards enjoyed. It was this revival of "La Sonnambula," however, which caused a reaction against the previously immense popularity of Fornasari. He played the *Count*, and gave to the part all the expression of which it is capable; but people would compare the *Count* with *Belisario*, and were, of course, disappointed.

On the opening night after Easter, Grisi and Lablache resumed their wonted places in "Norma," Madame Moltini taking the part of *Adelgisa*, and giving it a prominence too seldom awarded to it. "Semiramide" followed, with Grisi and Fornasari, Madame Brambilla (who for four years had been absent from England) taking the part of *Arsace;* and this opera drew some of the most crowded houses of the season. Then reappeared "Il Barbiere," with Grisi, Mario, and Fornasari, the last again to be admired as *Figaro;* although it was now admitted that he was "better fitted in statelier parts." "Don Giovanni" took the popular position next, with Grisi, Moltini, and Persiani, and

Fornasari as the *Don;* the last still the subject of extraordinary laudation, one paper alone discovering that "the enthusiasm of the town is already cooling with respect to the new *basso.*" The "Gazza Ladra" was produced for the benefit of the dancer St. Léon, who after the opera executed with brilliancy a solo on the violin; "I Puritani," with Grisi as *Elvira*, for that of Perrot. Then was revived "Lucrezia," with Lablache as *Alfonso*, to support the great *Lucrezia* of her time, Madame Grisi; Mario again winning his way gallantly in furtherance of his rising fame as *Gennaro*, the part in which he had first appeared before a London public.

Two operas first introduced during this season demand more especial mention—"Linda di Chamouni" and "Don Pasquale." Both were by Donizetti, whose reputation as a composer was rising in England, notwithstanding old prejudices. The latter work had been eminently successful in Paris and the former in Vienna, and they were now placed on their trial before an English audience. Each of these operas, it may be as well to state at once, proved brilliantly successful.

"Linda di Chamouni" was produced, for the benefit of Madame Persiani, on the 1st of June. The cast, including Persiani herself, Brambilla, Mario, Lablache, Fornasari, and Federico Lablache, was a great, *almost* a perfect one. The town was "taken by storm," and I was universally congratulated on the great success achieved. It is somewhat curious to see how the musical world of that day contrived to recede from the previous tones of depreciation with which it had been the fashion to receive the operas of Donizetti. "Dramas of a higher class," people affirmed, "were unsuited to

Donizetti's powers. "Unable to cope with the grand and terrible, he can treat a subject like this with considerable feeling." He had displayed "more aim at the chaste and pathetic, less confidence in naïve and unmeaning common-place." He was suddenly found to possess "to a considerable degree the gift of melody." And so on, and so on, in varied phrase of retractation. Some of the would-be consistent, it is true, declared the music "poor," with "no richness of harmony, no depth of combination," or admitted, at most, that it was the "least offensive" of Donizetti's operas. As for the public, it insisted on judging the opera from its own point of view: it applauded, it crowded to the representations, it insisted upon making it a *success*.

On the 29th of June, for the benefit of Lablache, I produced "Don Pasquale." Grisi, Mario, Fornasari, and Lablache afforded an admirable quatuor for the performance of this genial *opera buffa*, the success of which was perhaps even greater than that of "Linda." I might now indeed deem myself fortunate, for bringing out in one season two new operas, each of which won such *golden* opinions. Warned by this second success, the press now grew lavish in their praise of Donizetti. He was declared to have composed his Parisian opera in his "happiest vein." It was studded with "musical beauties," and contained "more marks of originality that most of his works," &c., &c. In fact, the tide not only changed, but now flowed strongly in favour of the once despised composer. The racy comic humour of Lablache, and the spirit of Grisi, combined with the pleasant and careful execution of Mario and Fornasari, may have contributed sensibly to a success, nowise certainly promoted by the unusually meagre, flimsy *libretto*.

But, in a musical point of view, the verdict was certainly favourable, and none could better recognise the fact than the fortunate manager.

While on the subject of Donizetti, I would observe that those of his operas which achieved the most marked success on the Anglo-Italian boards, in the teeth of the early opposition of the so-called classicists, were precisely those which have stood the test of time in Italy; and that, in this respect, the discrimination of English taste is attested. Few of the operas of his predecessors, including even Mozart and Rossini, have been equally fortunate in keeping the stage. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that many beautiful musical works have failed in establishing a footing, entirely through the weakness or dulness of the *libretto*. "Cosi Fan Tutte," "Il Flauto Magico," and "Il Seraglio," may all be cited as instances, together with a perfect host of Rossini's operas. It is evident that the success of "Guillaume Tell" was never commensurate, at least in Paris, to its marvellous musical merits, on account of a similar drawback; and there is sufficient cause to believe that the refusal of Rossini to compose any other opera after "Guillaume Tell," was mainly owing to the comparative coldness with which this work had been received by the Parisian public. The contrast of that coldness with the enthusiasm afterwards bestowed upon inferior productions by second-rate masters, is known to have been felt by him acutely. "*Que voulez vous?*" he is narrated to have said: "*Je ne suis qu'un compositeur, moi! Eux, ils sont des hommes d'affaires.*" Scribe, it is well known, regretted, all his life, that he had not been allowed to treat the subject of "William Tell" for Rossini; and

there can be little doubt that with his power of artistic construction, combination of effects, and well-balanced contrast of "situations," he would have succeeded in producing a work more attractive, and thus far more worthy of the great *Maëstro*, than the heavy monotonous "book" of M. Jouy, a work devoid of variety of effects, and the heaviness of which is nowhere relieved by a change of tone in the colouring.

As what I have said concerning the decline of Fornasari's popularity during this season might seem to imply a charge of capriciousness or defective judgment on the part of the professional critics, I will here say a few words respecting the press in general. The gentlemen of the "Fourth Estate," as it has been happily called, have difficult duties to perform. To write, on the instant, their impression of works just seen and heard, requires a steady hand and intelligent head; and words must indeed possess supernatural vitality that could convey, at all times, such an account as will satisfy the cravings of admirers, the carpings of detractors, the impartial but varying critical judgment of connoisseurs, as well as reflect the impression made on the public.

I have generally recognised in the members of the press, heart, principle, and right feeling; and when the power entrusted to them, for good or for evil, is considered, their impartiality is wonderful. They may, at times, possibly be "to our faults a little blind, and to our virtues very kind," but is it not well to temper justice with indulgence? There are many great artists whose rising talent has been encouraged at the commencement (when a word would have been sufficient to destroy), and developed by kindness on the part of the

press, coupled with a judicious moderation in the exercise of critical acumen.

There is no class of men from whose society I have derived more pleasure than the literary, particularly of that section connected with the press. The exigency of the public, requiring generally a report of the events almost as soon as they occur, necessitates in them an habitual readiness of expression particularly agreeable in the passing hours of recreation, when the flowers rather than the granite constructions of literature are welcome. My relations with many of the periodical critics—present to me at this moment—count amongst my most pleasing recollections.

If the press were not unkind in my prosperity, they were truly kind to me in my adversity; and indeed to thoroughly appreciate their sterling qualities, one must have passed through a varied career like mine, the last phase of which confirmed my belief that their sensibility to impressions, so necessary to the proper discharge of their arduous duties, belongs not less to the heart than to their talent and intelligence.

While speaking of the press, a literary dinner occurs to my memory which, among a certain party, was long afterwards talked about as the "Banquet of the Wits." The dinner took place at my villa; the guests, some ten or twelve, comprised several choice spirits of the day, and more than ordinary brilliancy was expected from the circumstance that Messrs. W. M. Thackeray and G. A. à Beckett (now, alas! both deceased) were among their number. Expectation was grievously disappointed. Never was the "feast of reason" more insipid; never did the "flow of soul" more closely approach stagnation. The smaller wits thought all the sparkling was to be done

by the more distinguished luminaries, and these, with distressing magnanimity, refused to outshine their less noted brethren. Thus a perfect equilibrium of dulness was preserved.

CHAPTER VIII.

Season of 1843 (Continued)—The Ballet—Its Remarkable Brilliancy with Cerito, F. Ellsler, Dumilâtre, Perrot—"State Visit" of Her Majesty to the Opera in July—The "Pas de Deux" a Great Feature of the Evening—Rivalry of the Two Danseuses—First Appearance of Camillo Sivori, the Violinist, in England—His Triumphant Success—Lola Montez—Her Pretensions to the Rank of a "First Subject"—Exposure of their Fallacy—Lola Withdrawn from the Boards of the Opera by Myself on Conscientious Grounds—Exigent Demands upon the Administration of the Theatre by Persons of Rank and Influence, as well as by Artists—Satisfaction Generally Felt with the Performances throughout the Season of 1843.

THE ballet having been considered so extremely important at this particular time, a brief record of its attraction is necessary to complete my chronicle of this unusually brilliant season. A divertissement rather than a ballet properly so called, under the title of "Un Bal Sous Louis XIV.," combined the talents of Fanny Ellsler and Dumilâtre, who danced the Minuet de la Cour, Elssler being the cavalier. "La Gipsy," reduced to one act, afforded Fanny Ellsler an opportunity of being seen in one of her greatest triumphs. A Turkish divertissement, entitled "Les Houris," with Dumilâtre as principal danseuse, crowded the "Fops' Alley." There were also detached *pas*, in which Guy Stephan and her seductive associates acquired a fair share of distinction. The brilliant ballet of "Alma," with Costa's varied

music, introduced the favourite Fanny Cerito once more; another and still more attractive framework was found for the latter-named danseuse in "Ondine," which ran on until the end of the season; whilst the great, the inimitable Fanny Ellsler was afforded some scope for her histrionic genius in "Le Délire d'un Peintre." Brief as the chronicle may appear, the glories of the ballet may in this year be said to have almost reached their culminating point.

So ran on the season, triumphing in its course. But in this mere outline I have passed over certain events to which reference must now be made.

The most important, as connected with the fortunes and reputation of the theatre, was unquestionably the visit of the Queen "in state." Friendly agencies were employed to procure this desired result, but fortune seemed determined to smile upon me just now in every way, and my task was not difficult. Several of the leading men of the day smoothed the path for the manager, and even strewed it in some sort with roses. The "state visit" was fixed for Thursday the 20th July, and there was considerable excitement existing on the occasion, not only as this was the first state visit since Her Majesty's accession, but for more than ten years no monarch had appeared in state at the opera-house. As may be supposed, considerable care and boundless expense were bestowed upon the decoration of the royal boxes; and in spite of some carpings and cavillings at what were considered the *exorbitant* prices demanded, the evening passed over with *éclat*, not to say with triumph. The manager received the congratulations and moreover the thanks of royalty, and the sun of fortune seemed to shine upon him with

unusual lustre. The opera of the evening was "Il Barbiere," with Grisi, Mario, Lablache, and Fornasari. But so great was still the *prestige* of the ballet, that the chief excitement of the evening was produced by the charming *pas de deux* between Fanny Ellsler and Cerito. This conjunction of the two great planets of "La Danse" was the result of a desire expressed by the Queen. All the skill and taste of Perrot had been employed upon the construction of this "sensational" (as we should now call it) feat—and the effect proved unequivocally great. Captivating as were both the danseuses on this occasion—much as Cerito exerted all her powers—different as were the styles of the two rivals, and strong as both were in their partisans and supporters, there can be no doubt that, in the eyes of connoisseurs, the victory remained with Ellsler.

Another event deserves mention, viz., the first appearance, in England, of Sivori, the violinist at Her Majesty's Theatre, on the 18th May of this year. Much credit was due, I had heard, to the talent of this celebrated pupil of the great Paganini, and at once I decided to bring him to England. He was received by the opera-frequenters with admiration, even with enthusiasm. The instrument he played upon was the magic violin bequeathed to him by his dying master, and the fanciful legends of Italy having set afloat a notion that the soul of Paganini had taken refuge in the instrument, the popular ear, charmed by the young artist, listened credulously to the fable. Even in England the press declared that "Sivori was not Sivori—it was Paganini restored to another generation in a renovated and younger form."

There is still another event remaining, in the circumstances connected with which there is something so strangely

ludicrous, that I can scarcely look back upon it without a smile. This event was the appearance, as a danseuse, of the late celebrated "Lola Montez." It is not my intention to rake up the world-wide stories of this strange and fascinating woman, not long since passed from the world. Perhaps it will be sufficient to say frankly, that I was in this instance fairly "taken in." A noble lord (afterwards closely connected with the Foreign Office) had introduced the lady to my notice as the daughter of a celebrated *Spanish* Patriot and martyr, representing her merits as a dancer in so strong a light that her "appearance" was granted. The afterwards great Lola was received with rapture. Public, press, operagoers, all gave way to such immoderate fits of enthusiasm that it is difficult at this day to account for the strange infatuation which pervaded all ranks. True, the so-called "Señora" was singularly beautiful; her style was new, and there was something *piquant* and provocative in the surprise created. Yet she had no pretensions to the title of "danseuse" in any sense; to speak the plain truth, she was but the veriest novice in her art, which she had never studied, as *an art*, at all. I do not intend by this plain statement to declare that the French and Italian schools of dancing are alone to be endured by spectators of the highest class—for there is art in the Spanish school of dancing as well as in the others. But this spurious Spanish lady had no real knowledge of that which she professed. The whole affair was an imposture; and on the very night of her first appearance the truth exploded. Doubts already created were confirmed, and the true Spaniards indignantly refused to acknowledge the impostor as an exponent of their national dance. On the discovery of the truth, I de-

clined to allow the English adventuress, for such she was, another appearance on my boards. And certain it is that I acted wisely, though I had to exercise the virtue of self-denial; as there is little doubt, from the reception she had met with on the first nights, that the lovely woman would have drawn large sums of money to my treasury, for some time at least. In spite of the expostulations of the "friends" of the lady—in spite of the deprecatory letters in which she earnestly denied her English origin, and boldly asserted that she was a true "Lola," a genuine "Montez"—in spite even of the desire expressed in high places to witness her strange performance, I remained inflexible, and the false *danseuse* was never again allowed to exhibit her handsome person and her spurious graces at Her Majesty's Theatre.

Smooth and pleasant as the pathway of management seemed at this time, it must not be supposed that it was altogether without its stumbling-blocks and petty hindrances. The main difficulties had indeed been planed down; but although the cabals of *la vieille garde* were in abeyance, or only faintly appeared during this year, there were a few rough places in the otherwise straight and prosperous course. Part of these, certainly, arose from the repeated exigences of the great in name and position, and some few of the more influential of the subscribers. Demands for changes in the performance, for the suppression of this opera or the repetition of that, to suit the convenience of one great person or another, for the purpose of serving a singer's interest or for the gratification of a passing fancy—all these were constant thorns in the side of a manager, who was only desirous to conciliate all his patrons. When to such annoyances are added the unreasonable requirements

and caprices of artists, with their angry expostulation relative to the position of boxes given, and "explosions," in which Mademoiselle Cerito, for instance, was continually indulging, it may be easily conceived how that difficulties should habitually occur.

Many of these were caused by a set of people (called by the Italians "procoli"), consisting of the fathers, mothers, aunts, or other relatives, real or fictitious, of the artists. These hangers-on consider their "vocation gone" if they do not "stir up the waters." The "Père Cerito" was a notable specimen of the genus. He considered his own presence at the theatre as necessary as that of his daughter. In lauding her choice "effects," he would invariably speak collectively, and say, for instance, "*Nous* avons dansé magnifiquement ce soir."

On the whole, however, there is not much left to record beyond the widely-spread satisfaction felt with regard to the performances during the glorious season of 1843.

CHAPTER IX.

Season of 1844—Continued Prosperity—Countess of Cannazaro's Cook—Difficulty with Fornasari—Corelli—"Esmeralda"—"Zampa"—Failure of Felice—Mademoiselle Favanti—Decline of Fornasari's Popularity—Costa's *Don Carlos*—Ricci's *Corrado d'Altamura*—Strength of the Ballet—Equivocal Success of Moriani—Visit of the Emperor Nicholas—The Salvi Row—St. Léon and the Private Box—Musical Tact of Diplomatists—Sound and Colour.

THE season of 1844 opened with the "halo" of the past year still reflected on it. The fortunes of Her Majesty's Theatre were now, in the opinion of the public, firmly established in my hands. The permanent prosperity of the theatre was never for one moment doubted. Such was its apparent rude health, that no one dreamed of decline; so radiant was its aspect, no one could suspect that misfortune would ever assail it, much less that it was ever to decay and fall to dissolution. The season of 1844, like that of 1843, offers but little occasion for remark, and few striking facts to record. On a sea apparently so unruffled, there seemed to exist no shoals to be marked on the navigation chart as dangerous, hardly as noticeable.

Grisi and Persiani, the established and favourite *prime donne*, still headed the programme. Favanti (Miss Edwards) was announced. She came fortified by credentials from the first Italian artists and musicians,

deriving additional strength from the favourable opinion of Signor Lablache. As one of the very few English singers who had, as yet, ventured to confront the prejudices of their countrymen on an Italian stage in England, she was entitled to a fair hearing; although she may not have dared to battle in favour of English art without assuming an Italian name. England has since learned to feel pride in her native singers, and if these would appear in Italian opera, they need no longer assume a name ending in "o," "a," or "i."

Lablache, the Magnificent, was at his accustomed post in the opera hemisphere, the brilliant planet, accompanied by the revolving satellite, his son. Fornasari, too, who had sprung with one bound to the summit of popularity in this country, in the previous year, had to maintain his footing. Overtures had been indirectly made by Tamburini to the management, but they never came to anything. The name of Signor Mario, gradually rising into celebrity, gladdened the eyes of the subscribers. Hopes had been entertained that Rubini might be induced to break through his resolution of the previous year, and once more to delight a London audience; but in spite of very earnest efforts to secure his services, every appeal was in vain. Rubini's letters on this occasion evinced the most kindly feeling. "*Se canto ancore*," he wrote, "*Canto per voi—vi do la mia parola.*" Again and again he repeated that should he ever sing again it would be for him whom he was pleased to call "his excellent, kind English manager."

Rubini, whose "feathery notes," as they were termed (the expression died with him), so often brought tears to the eyes of his more sentimental admirers, was not only a man of most kindly feeling, but a "fellow of

infinite humour." I remember a comical scene that occurred at the theatre in which he and Lablache were concerned, the chief artist being the Countess of Cannazaro's cook. This worthy man, excellent no doubt as a *chef*, took it into his head that he was a vocalist of the highest order, and that he only wanted opportunity to earn musical distinction. His strange fancy came to the knowledge of Rubini, and it was arranged that a performance should take place in the morning, in which the cook's talent should be fairly tested. Certainly every chance was afforded him. Not only was he encouraged by Rubini and Lablache (whose gravity on the occasion was wonderful), but he was accompanied by these artists, and by a few others, Costa included, as instrumentalists. The failure was miserable, ridiculous, as everybody had expected. I have had my experience that a neglected genius seldom turns out to be worth much, and the musical cook was no exception to the general rule.

A new tenor, named Corelli, and a fresh bass were announced, the last by the name of Felice. Moriani, one of the best reputed tenors in Italy at the time, especially as a fine dramatic artist, was destined to be one of the celebrities of the season, although his name did not originally appear on the programme. The ballet, meanwhile, still continued to enjoy the supremacy it had acquired; Fanny Ellsler, the great dramatic *danseuse, par excellence,* was to be restored to the subscribers. Then there were Carlotta Grisi, sparkling and lively; Cerito so buoyant and so capricious; Guy Stephan, always a favourite; and a new *danseuse,* Adelaide Frassi (about whom some expectation was raised), with a train of minor stars. Strenuous efforts,

it will be seen, had been made to support the ancient *prestige* of Her Majesty's Theatre in the ballet department. Male dancers, not yet looked down upon as troublesome and obtrusive accessories, and in truth generally necessary to support the *danseuse* in many of her most striking *pas*, were hailed with considerable satisfaction, bearing, as they did, the names of Perrot and St. Léon. Indeed, if any genuine lovers of the ballet, in a really artistic point of view, are still left in England, they must surely look back with envy and regret to the palmy days of 1844 and 1845.

The season was announced to open with Herold's opera of "Zampa," arranged for the Italian stage, with Fornasari in the principal character. This promised work was not destined, however, to be produced on the opening night. A violent quarrel had taken place between the robust singer and the manager of the Italian Opera in Paris. Not only angry words, but blows (it was alleged), had been interchanged, and Fornasari was obliged to remain in Paris to abide the issue of the court of law called in to decide upon the fray. I hastened to the French capital, to see whether, with a little address, I could not rescue my promised hero from the consequences of his impetuosity.

To a considerable degree I succeeded in smoothing down the stormy waves of strife, but found it impossible to withdraw Fornasari from his disagreeable position in time to appear on the opening night of the London season.

It is scarcely too much to say that the whole affair had a fatal result. When Fornasari arrived in London he was too ill to sing. The occurrences in Paris had a serious effect upon his health. He had become so haggard and sallow as to be scarcely recognisable; whilst

his voice was materially affected. From this depression, the effects of which were sensible during the rest of the season, he never completely recovered. He retired from the stage about a year later, and (whatever may have been the cause of his death) did not live long afterwards.

The only substitute to be found for the announced opera was Donizetti's unfortunate "Adelia," which, as I have recorded, had not been successful on its production during the previous year. When revived for the opening of the season, on the 9th of March 1844, it was supported again by Madame Persiani; Corelli, the new tenor, appearing in the part originally sustained by Conti. Persiani, though now somewhat on the wane, was one of the favourites of the day. Corelli was generally pronounced a pleasant tenor, fitted for the *Nemorinos* of the stage, and so far an acquisition. But "Adelia," although "backed up" by one of the most successful choreographic displays ever witnessed on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre, would not, could not attract. It lingered on for a few nights, when it was deemed advisable to bring out the promised opera of "Zampa," even without Fornasari. Felice, the new basso, was hastily called upon to take the weight of the opera upon his shoulders, and "Zampa" was produced on the 19th of March. Whether he had been too much hurried in the study of his music, or whether he lacked capacity for his task, poor Felice completely broke down. Never was failure more complete. The public was not even able to arrive, under the circumstances, at any judgment of the music, and "Zampa" was necessarily withdrawn after only one night's performance.

In the meanwhile the other great promise of the opening night had been excellently fulfilled. "Esmer-

alda," brought out at the appointed time, was received with enthusiasm. All had been done that was possible, in the way of scenery and decorations, to give *éclat* to this choreographic version of Victor Hugo's romance. Perrot had adapted the story for ballet purposes with peculiar skill. Carlotta Grisi, as the heroine, showed that she had gained greatly in the mimic art, and acted as well as danced her difficult part to perfection.

The *Gringoire* of Perrot long remained one of the striking traditions of the ballet. St. Léon, and Frassi the new *danseuse*, strengthened the cast. "Esmeralda," one of the last as it was one of the best of the greater dramatic ballets produced upon the Anglo-Italian boards, created perhaps the greatest "sensation" during the season of 1844.

Before dismissing this famous ballet, I may mention that I myself originally proposed the subject to Perrot, who at first rejected it as impracticable. Eventually, however, Perrot altered his opinion, and I frequently sat up with him the greater part of the night, in order to assist and encourage him in his labours. Pugni was brought over from Paris for the purpose of composing the music, and was always present ready to seize any idea that might suggest itself for a "situation" or *pas*. At this time he was comparatively unknown, but he subsequently composed the music to the principal ballets at Her Majesty's Theatre. For this style of composition his talents seem to have been peculiarly fitted. He has been since, however, attached to the service of the Emperor of Russia, expressly for the purpose of composing the military music for the Russian army, and in a sphere thus singularly different, he is reported to have been equally successful.

So far, in spite of the difficulties and drawbacks attendant upon operatic productions at this period of the year, the season may have been said to have opened creditably.

The next event, anticipated with considerable anxiety and some degree of excitement, was the *début* of Signora Favanti, the new English aspirant for fame on the Italian stage. With the great expectations raised, it was not surprising that, on Saturday the 23rd of March, the theatre was crammed to overflowing. Glowing accounts of the quality of the young singer's voice, of her style, of her dramatic power, of her personal beauty, were everywhere current. Public expectations were not disappointed. Like that of Fornasari, her *début* was one long scene of triumph. The *habitués*, with but a few exceptions, revelled in enthusiastic laudations of her wonderful powers, and in their hyperbolic phrases, Malibran, compared with the new operatic star, was "a kitchen wench," Pasta "a dowdy." Among the very few dissentients to this verdict was one newspaper, which remarked that "Miss Edwards has yet to become a scholar. It would be kinder to give the lady a chance of permanent success by persuading her to retire to a course of earnest vocal and musical study. Without some such measure, Miss Edwards has nothing before her but professional mortification." This paper, however harshly its judgment may have been expressed, spoke, in this instance, the truth. Mademoiselle Favanti, in spite of her illustrious Italian certificates, was soon compelled to descend from the throne to which a misplaced enthusiasm had raised her.

It is however but fair to state that the success of Mademoiselle Favanti in the "Cenerentola" was gene-

rally admitted, and that she was not only a favourite with the general public, but a benefit to the treasury. A "dead set," however, was made against her by various artists and their partisans; and as she was of a nervous and susceptible temperament, her health suffered in consequence. Until the principal singers could be obtained from Paris, the *répertoire* was strengthened by the "Elisir," with Madame Persiani as the heroine.

The after-season, which commenced on the 9th of April, brought the expected *troupe*, and Grisi, Mario, Lablache, and Fornasari appeared in the "Puritani." "Don Pasquale" followed, with the substitution of Corelli in the place of Mario, already on the sick list, and afforded that pleasant tenor the opportunity of winning his spurs gallantly in one of Mario's own parts. Mademoiselle Favanti gave her "*non più mesta*" in an episodical interlude; but though still received with applause, she now began to meet with a growing opposition; and when afterwards she played *Arsace* in "Semiramide," even her most enthusiastic admirers began gently to hint at shortcomings, and to reverence her with "faint praise;" whilst the more rigid judges announced the second trial a hopeless failure. In "Norma" as *Adelgisa*, in "Don Giovanni" as *Elvira*, and a little later in the "Matrimonio Segreto," she had further opportunities of supporting her somewhat prematurely acquired reputation; but little by little the original enthusiasm gradually declined, and the brief favourite of the day passed into obscurity.

Cerito, meanwhile, had been presiding, *vice* Carlotta Grisi, who had departed, over the great choreographic banquet of the season, and on the 9th of May the opera

of "Zampa" was reproduced, for the benefit of Fornasari, that singer taking the part for which he had been originally intended, with a "cast" strengthened by Lablache in the comic part of *Dandolo*. A few special words must be given to this occasion.

Already Fornasari had ceased to hold the supreme position which had been hastily and generally granted him during the previous season, and though he was still enthusiastically received by the general public, a few "carpings and cavillings" began to be heard. Doubts timorously indeed were whispered here and there, and it became gradually evident that Fornasari was not exactly the "conquering hero" which previous trumpetings had so loudly proclaimed him. In spite of his efforts on this occasion, backed by the advantage of Lablache's name and the singing of Persiani, in spite of the catching melodies, the vigorous chorusses and the dramatic style of Herold, "Zampa" failed in establishing itself upon the Anglo-Italian boards. After a very few nights, on which it was lustily applauded, it wholly disappeared from the bills. However, in behalf of the fame of Herold, it should be mentioned that a considerable portion of the frequenters of Her Majesty's Theatre only admitted at this period, as acceptable on its boards, the Italian school, *pur et simple*, and looked with coldness and mistrust on any names, however accredited, which revealed a French, a German, or, still worse, an English origin. Thus Herold can in fact scarcely be said to have had "fair play" at Her Majesty's Theatre.

The chances of French opera having become more than questionable, the established favourites of the accustomed *répertoire* ran on their usual triumphant

course. "Don Giovanni," "Il Matrimonio Segreto," "Il Barbiere di Siviglia," "Semiramide," "Lucia di Lammermoor," "Lucrezia Borgia," "Otello," "Anna Bolena," "Don Pasquale," "I Puritani," with one incidental performance of "La Prova d'una Opera Seria," for a benefit, occupied the stage almost exclusively: affording scope for the talents of Grisi, Persiani, Mario, and Lablache, who were always welcome in their familiar *rôles*, and still drew applauding crowds, unwearied by repetition.

Amid this cluster of established *répertoire* operas, two novelties endeavoured to raise their heads during the season, but both failed to attain a permanent position. Signor Costa's "Don Carlos" was produced for the eminent conductor's own benefit, on the 20th June. It had been long talked of, long expected, and the musical *dilettanti* of the day were naturally excited by curiosity as to the result of its production. The "Malek Adel" of the same composer, although when it was brought out it attained a certain kind of celebrity (chiefly from the renown of a *cavatina* sung by Rubini), and was even repeated upon the Italian stage in Paris, had long since disappeared from the boards. Nevertheless considerable expectations were still afloat.

"Don Carlos" was well "mounted," and supported by Grisi, Mario, Lablache, and Fornasari. Like its predecessor, it utterly failed to maintain any prominence. It survived but a very few nights, and then, like "Malek Adel," sank into the vast "limbo" of forgotten works.

Whatever may have been the real merit of this production, from a managerial point of view it was undeniably a failure. That is to say, it neither attracted

the public nor brought money to the treasury. It is by such tests alone that an operatic or a theatrical director can discover what is and is not conducive to the interest of an establishment. The subject of "Don Carlos," it may be stated, was "sombre" and lugubrious, and on the first night, Mario and Lablache were both hoarse, wearied by long rehearsals. This could not be otherwise than detrimental to "first impressions," but the artists gallantly supported their conductor's fame on the second night of performance.

It is extraordinary that Costa should have failed where it was natural to conclude his experience would have made him absolute master, namely, in the adaptation of his music to the singers' voices. The artists all complained (in an undertone, of course), that the *Tessitura* was too high for them, and that if the management continued to give Signor Costa's opera, injury to their voices would be the inevitable consequence. One great singer (an especial friend of the composer) urged this point strongly on the director, at the same time expressing surprise that Costa, who had had so much knowledge of the voices of the company, should compose for them *à travers*. But for these energetic remonstrances the opera might have been given oftener, notwithstanding the serious loss it entailed upon the treasury. For I felt how deeply Signor Costa was interested in its success, and, as a matter both of good-will and policy, I was desirous of pleasing my conductor. Combined, however, with the private complaints of the artists, were the expostulations of the subscribers, and in spite of personal inclinations I was obliged to withdraw the opera. The composer, as he could not suspect the artists, and was slow to believe in the dissatisfaction

of the subscribers, consequently threw all the blame on the management; and although I had laboured hard to procure an opposite result, he ascribed to me the comparative failure of his opera. This incident is one among many that tend to show the wisdom of the law laid down at the Grand Opera of Paris, peremptorily forbidding the production of any composition either of the *chef d'orchestre* or the director of the music.

The other novelty was Ricci's "Corrado d'Altamura," which was supported by Grisi, Mario, and Fornasari. This opera had been one of the items of the original programme of the season, but although it had been produced at almost every continental theatre, even out of Italy, it never was calculated to make a favourable impression on the London boards. It made its appearance towards the close of the season, but even had it been brought forward at a more auspicious date, it is questionable whether it could ever have maintained its ground. A heavy opera, based upon a dull *libretto*, had little chances in its favour with an excitement-seeking London audience, and "Corrado d'Altamura" was only performed on one single night.

The "Fantasma" of Signor Persiani, the husband of the celebrated *cantatrice*, had been also announced as one of the novelties of the season. But as the wits of the day had it, "Lumley gave up the ghost,"—very wisely, too, I may be permitted to add, since this opera brought with it no very favourable report from Paris. The reason of the original selection in this case will be obvious.

The *prestige* of the ballet, on the other hand, was maintained by Cerito in *Ondine*, and *Alma*, by the inimitable Fanny Ellsler, in "Le Délire d'un Peintre," and "La Paysanne Grande Dame,"—by both, in the

divertissement, "Un Bal sous Louis XIV.," in which Ellsler was the Chevalier of the Minuet, while Cerito was the lady. In the ballet of "Esmeralda" Fanny Ellsler was able to display her immense histrionic talent. Carlotta Grisi had gained therein the earliest laurels, but the great pantomimist was able to freshen them into new lustre. A mythological ballet, composed by Perrot, elaborate in detail, and produced with great care and expense, under the title of "Zélie," proved a failure, in spite of all the popularity of Cerito, for whom it was composed, for it was now that people began to murmur at the "bore" of applying their mind and attention to the comprehension of a plot expressed in action. It was an early symptom of the *décadence* of the ballet-pantomime; and the change of feeling, there is no doubt, contributed, along with some other circumstances hardly worth noticing, to the failure of the costly ballet of "Zélie."

Before closing this rapid sketch of the principal productions of the season of 1844, there is yet an operatic event to be recorded, viz., the first appearance in England of the celebrated Italian tenor, Moriani, whose engagement had not been promised, but was thrown over and above into the already full lap of the subscribers.

The success of Moriani was indubitable; equally indubitable were the rich results of his engagement to the treasury; equally indubitable the value of the demonstrations of enthusiasm elicited by his performances. Nevertheless, the attitude of the press was singular. Along with the more general and unqualified praise of this celebrated singer, came partial condemnations, unqualified also. Was *la vieille garde* at work again?

Certainly, with all Moriani's unquestionable greatness, there was a something which opened a field for discussion as to his merits. His fine voice was confessedly a little worn and unequal This in itself was quite enough for connoisseurs. Then florid execution was not his forte in singing, and therefore he could not please the one-sided admirers of the florid style. He was, however, beyond dispute, a great lyrical, dramatic artist. His *Gennaro* consequently, was superior, as affording greater scope for passion and feeling, to his *Percy* in "Anna Bolena," in which his powers as an actor could not be developed, perhaps even to his *Edgardo*, notwithstanding the opportunities afforded in the two finales.

The idolatrous admiration for Mario entertained by many persons at this time, doubtless influenced their judgment of Moriani; but I should state that, two or three years later, Moriani's success waned in Italy. This circumstance after all justifies, in some measure, the partial hesitation of the English critics.

One of the chief public events of the London season was the visit of Her Majesty to the opera, accompanied by the late Emperor of the Russias and the King of Saxony. I may now confess that the pleasure derived from the honour of this visit was somewhat mitigated by apprehension as to its possible consequences. The Emperor Nicholas was known to be an object of almost fanatical hatred to the Polish refugees who find their home in London, and an attempt at assassination was certainly an event probable enough to justify strong precautionary measures. Special care was taken to ascertain who was likely to occupy the boxes opposite to the Royal one, and a sort of *surveillance* was exercised generally.

The vigilance of Mr. (now Sir Richard) Mayne was also called into requisition.

As the illustrious party entered the house a certain trepidation was observed among the suite of the Emperor; but none whatever in himself. He stood firm and erect. Only when cheered after the performance of the Russian Hymn, which was played by the band, after the English National Anthem had been sung, he retired to the back of the box, as if yielding all the homage to the Queen. The opera was the "Barbiere." The Emperor was delighted with Lablache, laughing heartily at his drolleries, especially when this "spoiled child" of the public introduced his English or made allusions to the Royal visit; and I was requested to convey to Lablache the Emperor's satisfaction with his performance. Shortly afterwards overtures were made to the great artist for a season at St. Petersburg, which, after some hesitation, he accepted. It has been remarked that on state occasions it is always judicious to select an *opera buffa*. Such an opera is a contrast to the stateliness of the Court, whilst the lugubriousness of a tragic opera, heightened by the seriousness of the audience, adds to the monotonous effect of a picture already too cold and dignified.

Altogether the evening, with respect to which there had been some well-grounded apprehension, passed off exceedingly well, the applause bestowed on the Russian festival hymn being scarcely less than that which accompanied "God save the Queen." Indeed, few who witnessed the reception of the Imperial guest could have foreseen the Crimean war that was to occur a few years afterwards, although his visit to England was not wholly unconnected with the "Sick Man."

Another event of less public importance, but serious enough to cause me some uneasiness, occurred in the course of the season. One evening, to my utter amazement, bills were distributed and showered down upon the pit and stage from the upper boxes, demanding the engagement of the tenor Salvi (as yet unknown in England), and threatening the management with another "Tamburini Row," if prompt compliance with this demand were not given. The origin of this effort was never sufficiently clear to the public. Two of the bill distributors were prosecuted, and it was argued in their behalf that the illustrious noblemen and gentlemen of the other disgraceful disturbance were never cited before the police court for *their* misdeeds. Ultimately the affair was settled by a written apology, and by the payment of a fine of £50 to various hospitals by the disturbers of public order. Still it was evident that the sufferers were but agents of a mysterious influence, never discovered.

Another little event was the violent hissing of St. Léon, the popular dancer, by the occupants of an omnibus box. Some disturbance followed this demonstration, the public taking the part of the performer. Letters in the public papers ensued; the clique of noble subscribers asserting that M. St. Léon had made use of "insulting gestures" towards them, and maintaining their right to express disapprobation whenever they pleased, whilst the dancer emphatically denied any intention of insult, or any mark of disrespect. The public and the press ranged themselves on the side of the artist. "Nemo *Omnibus* horis sapit" was a quotation once more flung at the heads of the disturbers of order. A public apology, however, was offered in the "Times" by the dancer to the Duke of Beaufort.

The *fracas* was allowed to subside, although a general impression prevailed that the real rights of the case had never been clearly established.

It seems probable that St. Léon, who was then paying his addresses to Cerito (afterwards Madame St. Léon), fancied that some demonstrations of partiality (but demonstrations only) had been shewn to the object of his devotions by one of the noble occupants of the omnibus box, and that his jealousy was aroused. Certainly had the question, "*Dove la Femina?*" been put at any judicial investigation of the matter, as was the wont of the well-known Sicilian magistrate, every one acquainted with the gossip of the *coulisses* would have pointed to this fascinating *danseuse*.

It must not be supposed, however, because the general smoothness of the surface was preserved to public eye, that there were no quicksands beneath. Difficulties would arise with the great *prima donna* of the day about her *rôles*, and objections would be made about measures which she considered wounding to her *amour propre*. *Danseuses* persisted in objecting to their boxes, or their costumes, or alleged the scanty space of their dressing-rooms. Indeed, in the *ballet* department, a spirit of insubordination (which, however, was met by proper and immediate resistance on the part of the management) assumed at one time a somewhat dangerous form. One of the results of the director's resistance to these intestine tumults was the cancelling of the engagements of Mademoiselles Plunkett and Scheffer. In spite of the protecting influence thrown around the young ladies, I was resolved to display the firmness essential to my position; considering that whatever loss the public might sustain, the relaxation of discipline would involve a loss to the management far more serious.

More annoyances constantly arose from the repeated exigencies and hindrances of subscribers in "high places." These drawbacks are perhaps inevitable to a certain degree in the constitution of an establishment like that of Her Majesty's Theatre. But requisitions for changes of performances, only too often conflicting in their nature, and demands for, or objections to, engagements, just as conflicting, throw serious obstacles in the way of an administration—all the more serious as the treatment they require demands the constant exertion of delicacy and tact in order to confront such difficulties. In spite of all, however, the direction still pursued its course with growing prosperity, and with fresh advantages at once artistic and pecuniary.

During the short sojourn of the Emperor Nicholas in England, the veteran diplomatist, Count Nesselrode, by whom he was accompanied, was on one occasion my guest. I took the liberty of asking the Count the secret of his prolonged youth, when he replied, "Music and flowers." This anecdote may serve (as far as it goes) to confirm an observation which has been made to the effect, that long-lived diplomatists have generally cultivated a love for music. The present distinguished ambassador of Russia at the British Court (who accompanied the Russian chancellor on the visit referred to) is himself an enlightened connoisseur of the art. The late Prince Metternich is another very notable example. The late Duke of Wellington was one of the most constant supporters of the opera. Prince Paul Esterhazy, Count Rechberg, Lord Westmoreland, and others might also be enumerated.

Music and flowers! Delicious sounds and bright colours. I hope I shall be pardoned the digression when

I state, that I know a person with whom music and colours are so intimately associated, that whenever this person listens to a singer, a colour corresponding to his voice becomes visible to the eyes. The greater the volume of the voice the more distinct is the colour, and when the voice is good, the high and low notes are of the same colour; whereas if different colours appear during the performance of the same singer, the voice is naturally unpleasant or has been forced out of its natural register.

To show that my gifted friend is not content with maintaining a mere theory, I give a list of celebrated singers, with the colours which, it is asserted, correspond to their voices:—

GIUGLINI.—Maroon. The colour softened and well blended in its gradations. Substance, a rich velvet pile.

MARIO.—A beautiful violet, more like satin than velvet.

TAMBERLIK.—A carmine; but unequal—on some notes the colour very strong, and on some notes scarcely any colour. The voice like a cannon when fired; a flash succeeded by haziness, but the flash very brilliant whilst it lasts.

SIMS REEVES.—A golden brown, something like a shot-silk.

BELETTI.—Somewhat of crimson lake, mixed with indigo. Equal, but the two colours always mixed.

GARDONI.—A watery sun, with a dark cloud before it.

GRAZIANI.—An Indian red, tinged with a beautiful golden brown—a magnificent colour. Substance, a rich velvet pile.

ALBONI.—A blue (cobalt). Voice like so many raised lines or divisions, mechanically and formally correct. Latterly, some of the notes with colour less bright.

GRISI.—(Latter times)—Varies greatly—primrose, and sometimes changes to blue. *Mem.*—The colours change when the voice is not equal.

PICCOLOMINI.—Pétillant. Many sparkling emanations as when gunpowder is thrown on fire; some portions of the voice little colour, but those that have colour very brilliant and pleasing.

PATTI.—Light and dark drab, with occasional touches of coral.

BOSIO.—A very beautiful moss rose colour, with a diamond-like transparency.

TREBELLI.—Prussian blue, a strong ordinary colour—equal.

BORGHI-MAMO.—Scarlet and black. Some nights the voice being one colour, sometimes another, and occasionally both—made her performances differ, sometimes producing considerable effect, and sometimes but little. The middle voice is a good colour—the high and low an unpleasant one. They are probably not natural, but the result of force.

PAULINE VIARDOT.—At least half-dozen colours—one or two like a silk shot, the shots at moments very pretty, at other times very disagreeable.

CLARA NOVELLO.—Tomata; always the same, but a cold glaring colour.

TITIENS.—Red in some, and a pink in other parts of the voice. Latterly the colours faded in some of the notes.

LOUISA PYNE.—Pale sky-blue; very pretty and delicate, but a little faded.

MIOLAN CARVALHO.—A French lilac; very pretty.

BATTU.—Yellow and white—two distinct colours. Sometimes the white is beautiful and pure, whilst the yellow is not good; but sometimes the two colours blend, and form (in idea) a daisy, which is really pretty—like whipped cream with little bits of dark spice in it.

PENCO.—Some notes yellow, like a beautiful canary colour; but some notes are like yellow ochre—a vulgar yellow. The voice is unequal.

ALDIGHIERI.—Warm (reddish) violet colour.

CARLOTTA MARCHESIO.—A bronz auricola.

BARBARA MARCHESIO.—Carnation.

This faculty of perceiving colours while listening to music, though it sometimes increases the pleasure of the listener, may also be a source of pain. I do not mention names, but the person bears witness to the existence of voices that have caused an appearance of the colours of snails, stale beer, sour milk, curry powder, rhubarb, mud

splashes, and tea leaves from which the water has been strained.

Some may smile at the above, as the mere creation of an idle fancy; but I am inclined to regard the association between sound and colour as a proven fact, worthy of scientific investigation, and perhaps in another work I may descant more amply on the subject.

21350

CHAPTER X.

Prospects of 1845—The Singers provided of a high class—Dancers equally eminent—Theatre opens with "Ernani"—Doubtful appreciation of Verdi's Music in England—His claims to approval set forth—Difficulty of engrafting a new style upon English taste—Examples—Début of Lucille Grahn—First appearance of Madame Castellan—The "Viennoises"—History of their engagement—Obstacles thrown in the way by the Austrian Government—Real grounds of objection disclosed—The Ballet in high favour—Taglioni once more appears in "La Sylphide"—The "Pas de Quatre" devised—Dilemma, arising from unwillingness to commence on the part of each Danseuse—How solved by Director—Fame of the Pas de Quatre.

THE season of 1845, though, on the whole, prosperous, was not entirely exempt from vexations and troubles. Nevertheless it leaves a memory fraught with stirring interest and striking incident. Rarely, perhaps, had so much novelty—operatic and choreographic—been crowded into the space of one year. In many respects this season forms one of the most brilliant and notable periods of my management, and the task of giving a clear historical summary of the multifarious incidents which followed close upon one another, offers perhaps more difficulties than any other portion of my theatrical course.

The programme of the artists engaged for the season of 1845 was in itself full of novelty and interest. Grisi, as usual, headed the list, as the *prima donna*

assoluta supreme, and though the name of Madame Persiani was not in the catalogue of engagements, three new *cantatrici* were offered for approval to the subscribers of Her Majesty's Theatre—Mesdames Rita Borio, Rossi Caccia, and Castellan—all names of note and promise. Rubini still held coyly back in his retirement; but Mario and Moriani, Lablache and Fornasari, were all forthcoming. Two new baritones were announced—Monsieur Baroilhet, the popular artist of the Académie Royale in Paris, and Signor Botelli.

The ballet list was also agreeably varied. Taglioni—*the* Taglioni, who, for the last two seasons, had hesitated, wavered, and finally rejected the offers made to her—had at last consented to renew her course of triumphs upon the boards of the London Opera House. Carlotti Grisi and Cerito were once more to appear in tantalising rivalry. Fanny Ellsler was indeed absent, and could not be added to this splendid list; but a new danseuse, Mademoiselle Lucille Grahn, a young Danish artist, who had achieved the greatest success on many of the continental theatres, was to contribute to the brilliant galaxy. Perrot and St. Léon, the two most popular and accomplished male dancers of the time, closed the "bill of fare."

The season was announced to open with the "Ernani" of Verdi, a composer as yet unknown to the mass of the musical English public. But he had been crowned triumphantly, and had achieved the most signal successes in Italy. "Ernani" was generally pronounced, at that period, one of the best, if not *the* best, of his many applauded operas. It would have been strange if the announcement of the first production of one of Verdi's works upon the Anglo-Italian stage had failed to excite

the attention and interest of the musical world. At all events it was the duty, as well as the policy of the management, to bring forward the greatest novelty of the day—novelty sure to be called for with indignant remonstrance if *not* laid before the subscribers, however it might be scouted (according to custom) when it did make its appearance. A troop of wonderful children, who had excited an unusual sensation at the Grand Opera of Paris, under the name of the *Danseuses Viennoises* (of whom much will be said hereafter), were expected also on the first night, but extraordinary hindrances, of a character yet to be described, had frustrated this intention.

After some unavoidable delay, the season opened on Saturday the 8th March, with the promised opera of "Ernani." That it excited the general enthusiasm awarded to it so lavishly in Italy, cannot be asserted; that it was a failure, may be emphatically denied. The general result of this first introduction of Verdi to the English public was a feeling of hesitation and doubt; or as some one drolly said at the time, the "Well! I don't know's" had it! The English are tardy in the appreciation of any kind of novelty, and the reception of Verdi's opera was only in accordance with the national habit. It is well-known that a taste for this composer's music has survived all the opposition of an earlier period, and that he is now generally popular among the musical amateurs in this country. Whatever their intrinsic merits, his operas have achieved a widely-spread success, as provincial theatres and music halls can testify throughout the land; and there can be no doubt that whatever his alleged short-comings in some respects, he has at command passion, fire, and strong dramatic effect.

It may not be prudent in this case to apply the great *dictum* of Rossini, who, when his "Gazza Ladra" was severely criticised, and he was accused of violating the rules of musical grammar, retorted on his adversaries, "Well, then, reform your grammar, for it must be *that* which is defective." But results are matter of fact, and although it may not be accepted as a moral axiom that "what is pleasing must be good," popular opinion among the masses chooses to accept the *dictum* as true in regard to music.

On the first production, then, of "Ernani," the public seemed as yet unprepared to give a verdict of its own on the merits of the young composer, now first placed in England on his trial.

As I have said before, there are still old *dilettanti* who can remember the general condemnation of Rossini, "that hand-organ tune-maker!" when compared with Cimarosa, Pergolese, &c., and how his "Barbiere," which has since stood the test of years, was scouted as washy, weak, and frivolous. Then came Bellini's turn. "Le petit maître" was made to shrink into obscurity when compared with the "Gran Maestro" Rossini. As for Donizetti, he was denounced as a feeble plagiarist of the now admired Bellini. Now it was Verdi's turn to meet the usual fate, as a poor, worthless copyist of Donizetti, "so stirring and dramatic." Has real music, then, actually sunk through all these degrees of *diminuendo* to so very low a standard? Or does it not rather appear, on the face of these notorious facts, that a spirit of opposition to all novelty, and an assertion of excellence existing only in the past, is one of the great characteristics of English judgment on matters of

art, and that on this field, at all events, "conservatism" is the rallying cry of the country?

It cannot be said that "Ernani" contributed in any marked degree to the financial prosperity of the year. Madame Rita Borio, who made her first appearance in this opera, achieved a certain amount of success, "with modifications." The new baritone, Botelli, was summarily dispatched with "faint praise." Moriani and Fornasari, the popular favourites of previous seasons, were not allowed to gather fresh laurels in the new opera without considerable resistance. "Ernani," however, ran on, with its moderate degree of success, for several nights during the ante-Easter season, to be followed by "Le Désert" of Felicien David, which was given as a "musical *fête*" on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre. This "Grand Symphonic Pastoral Ode" (as it was denominated) met with a larger amount of "fair play" than the opera of Verdi, was very generally treated as an "extraordinary production" (not always in the best sense of the term), and was both applauded and to a great extent appreciated. As an "extra" entertainment, indeed, it was repeated several times.

Felicien David's odd composition, though rather more than a nine days' wonder, was but the wonder of a season. None of his subsequent works have attained an equal degree of celebrity; and it is recorded of a celebrated composer. who in society is scarcely less celebrated as a wit, that when asked his opinion respecting one of David's late productions, he drily remarked, "*Il est descendu de son chameau.*" An explanation often spoils as much as it elucidates a joke, but for the benefit of my younger readers I must take the liberty of stating that the subject of "Le Désert" is the journey

through the desert of a caravan, in which of course the camel plays an important part.

Another composer was far more severely treated by the same musical wit, who was one day found in the act of reading a score turned upside down. "What are you doing, Maestro?" asked the friend, who had discovered him thus strangely employed—"you have got the music the wrong way!" "True," replied the Maestro, "but as I can make nothing of ——'s music with the right side upwards, I am trying to solve its difficulties by looking at it topsy-turvy!"

The opening night of the season of 1845 was better signalized by the *début* of the promised danseuse, Mademoiselle Lucille Grahn, in an entirely new ballet, called "Eoline." This ballet, which, although somewhat fantastic, was completely intelligible, and had been superbly "mounted," was a decided success; not only was Mademoiselle Grahn received with enthusiasm, but critics declared that she combined the "ideal" school of Taglioni with the "realistic" school of Cerito, and the sprightliness of Carlotti Grisi, adding something of the pantomimic art of Fanny Ellsler. The "Mazurka d'Extase" (another "Pas de Fascination"), in which Perrot endeavoured to display his most ingenious powers of choreographic invention, was considered a *chef-d'œuvre*, as danced by himself and Lucille Grahn. The new danseuse, then, was accepted as an *émule* worthy to figure by the side of the three other illustrious artists in the coming great "sensation" of the season; and "Eoline" maintained its attraction firmly in the "annonces."

Tuesday the 1st April introduced Madame Castellan as *Lucia* in "Lucia di Lammermoor." The *débutante* was warmly welcomed, as one likely to soothe the regrets

of the public for the loss of Persiani, and to become her legitimate successor; and for a long period she maintained her *prestige* upon the London stage. Her performance in the "Sonnambula," in which she was now seconded by Mario, decided her unequivocal success.

On Saturday the 8th April, Grisi resumed her sceptre, and with it her sway over English audiences, in "Norma." But important as the event of her reappearance for the season may have been considered from an operatic point of view, the excitement for the nonce was unquestionably caused by the first performance of the "Danseuses Viennoises." The strange story connected with their first appearance—the records of the doubts, difficulties, and diplomatic discussions which had been going on up to this period, and the curiosity of the public, excited by the various rumours afloat, form a remarkable episode in my narrative.

This troop of "Little Fairies," as they were termed, numbering thirty-six little girls, had been collected in the city of Vienna by Madame Weiss, a dancing mistress. So completely had they been taught, drilled, and manœuvred into a juvenile "corps de ballet," that they executed a great variety of dances with a degree of precision, agility, and spirit, which caused their performance to be regarded as little less than marvellous. In their native city their extraordinary attraction had completely re-established the more than precarious fortunes of the Josephstadt Theater. A journey throughout many parts of Germany, undertaken without hindrance, had completed their success.

Their fame had reached Monsieur Pillet, then Directeur of the Grand Opera in Paris. They had been there engaged without the slightest difficulty, and the general

interest and excitement they had produced in the French capital naturally inspired me with the desire to secure them for Her Majesty's Theatre, and to present them as a novel attraction to my subscribers. An engagement was formed with Madame Weiss for the appearance of her extraordinary pupils in London, on their release from the French contract; and it was understood that this engagement was to commence upon the opening night of the season of 1845.

Unexpectedly the most untoward hindrances arose. The intimation came suddenly from Paris that the Austrian embassy "at the court of the Tuilleries" had refused passports for Madame Weiss and the children to England, and had transmitted orders from the Austrian Government for the return of the children, within a brief delay, to Vienna, under pain of being escorted back, as prisoners, by the police agents. No reasons for this very extraordinary order were given; but the command was stated to be imperative. Diplomatic negociations were immediately opened on my part, through Lord Cowley's kind intermediation with the Austrian ambassador in Paris, in order to obtain a revocation of this strange measure. I endeavoured to anticipate, as far as I could, any objections that might be urged as to the possible treatment of the children, or to the nature of the engagement; and pleaded the pledges I had given both to the Court and the public for their appearance. Still I was "fighting in the dark," inasmuch as no objections had as yet been alleged. The Austrian Embassy in Paris simply remained obdurate, advancing no reasons beyond "positive orders from the home Government." "The children must return, under the care of Madame Weiss, to Austria, or be re-conducted back by the police."

In this state of embarrassment, M. Pillet came forward. His contract with Madame Weiss, he proved, lasted for some time longer, and he claimed his "rights." The French authorities now intervened in favour of M. Pillet, the Government of Louis Philippe supporting the claims of the Director of the French Opera, whose "rights" were firmly sustained. No further demand was made for the immediate return of the children to Vienna, but the passports for *England* were resolutely refused.

In this position of affairs the home authorities appeared upon the scene. I was informed by Lord Delaware, the Lord Chamberlain, that "official application" had been made at his office by the Austrian embassy in London, "to restrain a company of young ladies from performing in this country," &c., &c. Here again I endeavoured to combat this strange and mysterious resistence by every possible explanation that could be deemed satisfactory, and by every argument based upon the good faith which I myself had pledged to the English public. By the Lord Chamberlain's office every facility was afforded to the vexed manager to "put matters straight" with the "paternal government" of Austria. At Lord Delaware's request I waited on Count Dietrichstein, the Austrian ambassador in London, the Lord Chamberlain being obliged by his official position to decline all direct intervention. At this interview I again urged the fact, that the "little fairies" were still permitted to dance in Paris; that I had engaged them only for three months; that no impediment had been originally thrown in the way of their engagement, and that it was only now, at the last moment, when I had paid over a large portion of the stipulated demand to Madame Weiss, and had pledged my word to "the most

distinguished personages in the realm," as well as to the public, that an unexplained opposition was offered to my views. The interview might have been spared. To every appeal there was but one answer in the mouth of the German diplomatist: "Orders from Vienna! Orders from Vienna!" I retired, completely baffled by the one dogged answer.

Negotiations, meanwhile, were carried on in Paris, through the intermediary assistance of Mr. Okey, the legal counsellor of the English embassy. Little by little, and as if with extreme reluctance, sundry specific objections oozed out. The "Paternal Government" had fears for the morality and the health of the "unhappy children." Documents were handed in to prove that the "unhappy children" were perfectly happy; that every care had been taken of their morality, their health, and their instruction. The ground was now changed. The next objection was to the effect that the parents of the children were desirous of their return. It was proved that the children had been mostly taken from a half-starved condition in the streets, and that the parents had all, in the first instance, looked upon their adoption by Madame Weiss as a providential boon. In this objection, however, there proved to be a faint show of reality. The parents had been latterly tampered with—by what means it was never allowed to transpire—and had objected to the continuance of their children with Madame Weiss, *unless* they received an increase of pay beyond that originally stipulated for with the dancing mistress. Further negotiations were entered into to obviate this hindrance, by means of one of the fathers (who was now brought over from Vienna for the purpose), and of three of the mothers, who had

accompanied their children during the whole of their excursion. I made fresh terms with the parents, and thus put an end to any objection in that quarter; but still the passports for England were obstinately withheld by the Austrian Government. At last—by what connivance, or what secret arrangement with the French authorities, does not clearly appear—Madame Weiss contrived to pass over from Hâvre de Grace, where the children were dancing, and with these she reached England in safety.

Their appearance was accordingly announced, when a strenuous effort was made to prevent it through the Lord Chamberlain's office. This put me on my mettle, and in my answer to the Chamberlain I claimed protection, as a British subject, against the unreasonable injury that was sought to be inflicted on me. In the meanwhile the truth of the real objection against the engagement of the children in England had been discovered at Vienna. The ultra-montane party in Austria had used all their influence and powers of intrigue with the government to prevent the children passing over into an "heretical" country. Morality, health, parental affection, had all been used as "blinds." The real bugbear was now unveiled. The poor innocents, it was feared, might imbibe heretical notions along with their "tea and cakes," and at every risk were to be kept aloof from the frightful infection. When this truth once flashed abroad in England, the papers raised the cry of "Jesuitism!" a name often identified with that of the ultra-montane, or fanatical Roman Catholic party, and denunciations came down upon the Austrian Government with bitter severity. Whether it was deemed prudent under these circumstances to remain quiet, or

whether the Austrian Government was simply *de guerre las*, no more was heard of the opposition against the engagement of the *Danseuses Viennoises*, or of the threats against the recalcitrant Madame Weiss. Indeed I was officially informed by the Lord Chamberlain that, "for the present, proceedings are suspended." The children appeared at Her Majesty's Theatre, and their success even surpassed expectation, the interest felt for them being perhaps heightened by the strange episodes I have just recorded.

The *Danseuses Viennoises* proved a great attraction and a great source of prosperity to the theatre during a large portion of the season of 1845. The enthusiasm in their favour was "all but" unanimous. A few objected that this style of dancing was perhaps not exactly adapted to the arena of Her Majesty's Theatre. One critic alone recklessly denied the now patent fact of ultra-montane intrigue, and raised the exploded cry of immorality; but his shrill voice was little heard amid the tumult of general applause. In the "very highest circles" great interest was excited in favour of the "little fairies," and every mark of kindly feeling towards them profusely shown. The chief attraction of these extraordinary performers consisted in the marvellous precision with which the most intricate and complicated *ensemble* dances were executed, and in the spirit as well as juvenile grace of the executants. The "Pas du Miroir," in which a portion of the little troop executed a very elaborate dance before a large gauze intended for a looking-glass, while another portion representing the corresponding figures went through the reverse movements behind the medium with such accuracy that the mirror-illusion was complete, was one

of the most extraordinary of these curious exhibitions.

The name of the genuine Spanish dancer, la Perea Nena, who made her appearance in England with a true exhibition of all the graces of the Spanish school of dancing, about the same time as the *Danseuses Viennoises*, varying the attractions of the "legitimate" ballet, must not be omitted. Her success was decided. In after years she headed the Spanish troop at the "Little Haymarket" Theatre.

The operatic performances ran on their usual course, with the old *répertoire*. "Don Pasquale," "Lucia," "Semiramide," "Il Barbiere," "I Puritani," "Il Pirata," and "Don Giovanni," attracted the respective admirers of these time-honoured operas, given with their customary exponents. But the ballet was still unquestionably considered the principal feature of Her Majesty's Theatre, and various evidences might be adduced to prove that the jealousy of many an operatic artist was aroused by the fact.

This feeling of annoyance and pique served, indeed, to augment the leaven of discontent and ill-will which once more began to cause ominous fermentation within the precincts of the theatre. A new ballet, "Kaya," was produced for Mademoiselle Grahn, and although, upon the whole, but coldly received, was taken as a proof of the desire of the management to bestow undue care upon the secondary department of the establishment. The favourite Cerito reappeared in "La Vivandiére," delighted the subscribers once in "Esmeralda," and was allowed, in her turn, a new ballet, called "Rosida, ou les Mines de Syracuse," which, by the way, was her own composition. These favours were construed into affronts to the operatic artists, not to be

endured without resentment. Besides, was not the advent of *the* Taglioni looked forward to as one of the greatest, if not *the* greatest event of the season? Were there not also rumours afloat of some extraordinary composition looming in the future, in which all the great *danseuses* engaged were to be united in a marvellous *pas d'ensemble?*

Taglioni did positively appear on the 26th of June, in the very ballet in which she had often won many hearts, viz., "La Sylphide," and was hailed with all the enthusiasm of old days. No one could be found to say that her former exquisite grace, her floating lightness of step, her bounding strength, had been in the least impaired by time; and whatever may have been the truth, Taglioni was received by general acclamation as the *Déesse de la Danse.* In this respect the expectations of the management, as well as those of the public, were fully answered. Soon was to follow the famous *Pas de Quatre*, the unquestionable "sensation" effect of the season of 1845; and to this "great fact" it may be as well at once to refer here, although with some disdain of the chronological order of events.

With such materials in my grasp as the four celebrated *danseuses*, Taglioni, Carlotta Grisi, Cerito, and Lucille Grahn, it was my ambition to unite them all in one striking *divertissement.* But ambition, even seconded by managerial will, scarcely sufficed to put so audacious a project into execution. No one could be more aware than myself of the difficulties I should have to encounter. The government of a great state was but a trifle compared to the government of such subjects as those whom I was *supposed* to be able to command; for these were subjects who considered themselves far above

mortal control, or, more properly speaking, each was a queen in her own right—alone, absolute, supreme! Great indeed had been the effort during the previous season to place *two* queens of Brentford upon one throne! But to establish *four* queens with equal rights together on the ballet throne of such a state may well have been considered an impossibility, to be discarded from the mind as a vain dream, incapable of realisation. "Impossibility," however, was a word I did not like in this instance to admit to my vocabulary. I knew the force of the old French saying, *Si c'est possible, c'est déja fait; si c'est impossible, cela se fera.* The impossible was to be done—nay, it *was* done.

But there existed difficulties beyond even a manager's calculations. Material obstacles were easily overcome. When it was feared that Carlotta Grisi would not be able to leave Paris in time to rehearse and appear for the occasion, a vessel was chartered from the Steam Navigation Company to waft the sylph at a moment's notice across the channel; a special train was engaged and ready at Dover; relays of horses were in waiting to aid the flight of the *danseuse*, all the way from Paris to Calais. These preparations were not the only means used on this trying occasion, where every chance of collision was to be avoided as instantaneously fatal to the vitality of the scheme; tact, temper, and every attribute of the diplomatic art were to be exerted to the utmost. In the execution of the project the difficulties were again manifold. Every twinkle of each foot in every *pas* had to be nicely weighed in the balance, so as to give no preponderance. Each *danseuse* was to shine in her peculiar style and grace to the last stretch of perfection; but no one was to outshine the others—unless in their own individual

belief. Lastly, the famous *pas de quatre* was "composed" with all the art of which the distinguished ballet-master, Perrot, was capable.

Let no one undervalue the magnitude of this tremendous task. I was informed by a well-known diplomatist that, when the preparations for the solemnities and festivities attendant upon the Coronation of the Emperor of Austria as King of Lombardy, at Milan, were placed in his hands, the settlement of a *pas de deux*, to be danced by Carlotta Grisi and Cerito (although then comparatively mere tyros at the Scala), cost him a hundredfold more trouble than all the other complicated arrangements of the festival.

All was at length adjusted. Satisfaction was in every mind; the *pas de quatre* was rehearsed—was announced; the very morning of the event had arrived; no further hindrances were expected. Suddenly, while I was engaged with lawyers in my own room, deeply occupied with the final arrangements for my purchase of the opera-house (of which more hereafter), poor Perrot rushed unannounced into my presence in a state of intense despair. Without regard for the serious conclave assembled, he uttered frantic exclamations, tore his hair, and at last found breath to say that all was over—that the *pas de quatre* had fallen to the ground and never could be given! With difficulty the unfortunate ballet-master was calmed down to a sufficient state of reason to be able to explain the cause of his anguish. The completion of the purchase of the opera-house was suspended for a few minutes and the explanation came, as follows:—

When all was ready I had desired Perrot to regulate the order in which the separate *pas* of each *danseuse* should come. The place of honour, the *last* in such cases (as

in regal processions), had been ceded without over-much hesitation to Mademoiselle Taglioni. Of the remaining ladies who claimed equal rights, founded on talent and popularity, neither would appear before the other. "*Mon dieu!*" exclaimed the ballet-master in distress, "*Cerito ne veut pas commencer avant Carlotta—ni Carlotta avant Cerito, et il n'y a pas moyen de les faire bouger; tout est fini!*"

"The solution is easy," said I to poor Perrot. "The question of talent must be decided by the public. But in this dilemma there is one point on which I am sure the ladies will be frank. Let the *oldest* take her unquestionable right to the envied position."*

The ballet-master smote his forehead, smiled assent, and bounded from the room upon the stage. The judgment of the manager was announced. The ladies tittered, laughed, drew back, and were now as much disinclined to accept the right of position as they had been before eager to claim it. The *ruse* succeeded. The management of the affair was left in Monsieur Perrot's hands. The order of the ladies being settled, the *grand pas de quatre* was finally performed on the same night before a delighted audience, who little knew how nearly they had been deprived of their expected treat.

The excitement occasioned by the announcement of the wonderful *pas* had been intense among the frequenters of Her Majesty's Theatre, and accordingly the theatre was crowded to suffocation, not only on the first, but on every night when it was given. The papers teemed with enthusiastic eulogiums. The ever-verdant "Punch,"

* There is no class so sensitive on the subject of "age" as the *danseuse*; hence the force of this suggestion.

and some of its minor satellites out of rivalry, produced caricatures of the political *pas de quatre*. The varied excellencies of each *danseuse* were warmly and eagerly canvassed in every club, at every dinner, in every ball-room. From the palace to the shop-counter the *pas de quatre* was the great topic of the day, to the exclusion of every interest, however serious. The excitement crossed the channel. Foreign papers circulated histories and descriptions of its wonders. Foreign courts received, along with official despatches, detailed accounts of its extraordinary captivations. It was literally a European event! It probably formed the culminating point in the History of the Ballet in England.

Such was the London world of 1845. Who cares for the ballet now? Unless there comes a reaction we shall perhaps find in a few years choreographic artists as little regarded as the singers in a chorus. However, these have their feelings as well as other people. I was once told of a chorus whose members felt deeply humiliated by the remark of the stage-manager to the effect that choruses were never noticed. The performance of this sensitive body was, generally, to say the best, indifferent, and on one occasion was so utterly execrable as to elicit a hiss from every part of the house. "There," cried one of the delinquents, triumphantly, "we *are* noticed after all!"

CHAPTER XI.

Season of 1845 (Continued).—Barroilhet and Rossi Caccia.—"Roberto Devereux"—Dissensions with Grisi and Mario—The box grievances—Survey of affairs—Vexatious attacks on the Management by individual Complainants—Financial prosperity—I purchase the lease of Her Majesty's Theatre—Testimonial offered by the artists on that occasion.

THE enchanting monotony of the customary operatic *répertoire*, in which "La Gazza Ladra," with Grisi, "Linda di Chamouni," with Castellan, "Lucrezia Borgia" and "Otello," with Mario, succeeded the old favourites already cited, was broken at last on the 24th of June, by the appearance of Barroilhet and Madame Rossi Caccia in "Roberto Devereux." Both came before the English public with a very high reputation, and consequently were worthy and legitimate engagements for a director of Her Majesty's Theatre, anxious to lay all available talent of note before his subscribers and his public. Neither, however, achieved any notable success, or made any very durable impression. M. Barroilhet was the favourite and admired baritone of the *Académie* of Paris. On the boards of the Parisian grand opera his reputation was immense. As the king in "La Favorita," and the mad monarch in Halevy's opera of "Charles VI., he had been proclaimed without an equal.

He came to London, however, with power somewhat impaired by time and exertion, still more by recent severe illness. Moreover, the *rôle* of "Nottingham" (though originally composed for him) was less favourable to his style than the parts in which he obtained repute in Paris. He appeared in two operas only, and then returned to France to recruit his failing health.

The lady above-named, who had "led the business" both at the Opera Comique and at the Grand Opera, of Paris, and who afterwards achieved successes on different continental theatres (especially at Lisbon, where she was the favourite *prima donna* of the day), scarcely succeeded in maintaining the position she had previously acquired when she came before the somewhat spoiled, and always fastidious, audience of Her Majesty's Theatre. She obtained, it is true, a share of approbation; but it was only moderate. Still she stood her ground as a regular member of the company, taking parts in the "Cosi fan Tutte" of Mozart, and the "Prova d'una Opera Séria." Nay, upon the sudden announcement of an inopportune "indisposition" on the part of Madame Grisi, only a few minutes before the commencement of the opera, and actually after the doors were opened, she rendered good service to the management by undertaking the part of *Norma* at so short a notice. The audience assembled on the occasion testified its sense of her good will by an unexpected reception and lavish plaudits throughout the whole evening; and Madame Rossi Caccia, although not to be cited as a thoroughly successful artist, retired from the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre, after a performance honoured by sufficiently flattering applause.

Thus much respecting a season of unwonted brilliancy

and prosperity, "before the curtain." But the curtain has still to be raised. There was much behind it far less satisfactory. Dissension, intrigue, and ill-will were again lifting their heads, and aiming at mastery. Bright as was the aspect on the public side of that curtain, there were clouds rising on the other side, pregnant with mischief for the future. Two "compellors of the storm" are visible, in their strength, above the others—the two ancient malcontents, or rather the two "rolled into one." In the records of the theatre, beyond the reach of the public gaze, Madame Grisi continually appears in the foreground, with "indispositions," and refusals to sing such and such a part—*Elisetta* in the "Matrimonio Segreto," for instance, which she had accepted in the previous season; she complains of the monotony of the old *répertoire*, and yet speaks slightingly, if not with scorn, of the new *rôles* offered her. There are indications of collision on many occasions—actual collisions and angry words on others; "wars and rumours of wars" are frequent; and at length comes a letter from Madame Grisi's lawyer, complaining of her box not being at her disposal on an *extra* night, and demanding the sum of twelve guineas, for which sum it had been let on that occasion. I demur to the grounds upon which her claims to the box on *extra* nights are based; assert that the box had been hitherto placed at her service as a matter of courtesy, not of right—a courtesy not intentionally discontinued—deprecate the course that the lady has unadvisedly taken in applying at once to a legal adviser, and leave her to find that remedy in the law, to which in fact she has already had recourse; I take this opportunity to remark upon "the unseemly conduct pursued by her on two recent occasions," and her

general behaviour towards the management, as forming a "discreditable exception" to the "otherwise orderly conduct of the company." This storm, sharp and noisy as were the thunder-claps, was but a prelude to the strife of elements that was presently to ensue. Side by side with the irritable and ambitious lady, stands the other notable transgressor—whose "indispositions" are, if possible, still more frequent, and who, on his own side, claims the right of refusing parts, in which, nevertheless, he had previously appeared. As a *pendant* to the box-grievance of the lady, appears a more complicated one on the part of the gentleman upon an occasion when, the "affair" having partly taken place before the public, the matter became in consequence the subject of "town-talk."

On the night of Saturday, the 26th April, Signor Mario appeared as the *Almaviva* of the "Barbière;" but only to disappear in the very first scene. An apology was made for "huskiness," and he again came on, omitting his "aria." Discontent began to be manifest. The "Rosina" (Madame Grisi) came forward, but commenced her air in such "admired disorder," that further manifestations of disapprobation arose. The *prima donna*, in her turn, came to a stand-still, and confronted the audience with wrathful brow. The jollity of Lablache for a time restored something like composure: at the commencement of the celebrated finale, however, *Almaviva* having reappeared, and murmurs having been again heard, the indignant tenor left the stage, to return no more that evening. The inimitable humour of Lablache, expressed at this sudden flight, restored the audience to good temper by its irresistible comicality. Another apology was made—Signor Corelli had been

sent for; and after some delay, the opera proceeded, with Corelli as the *Almaviva* of the night. An angry correspondence ensued between the management and the offending tenor: I, on my part, protesting that with but a slight display of good will, Signor Mario might have spared such an indignity to the subscribers and the public—the recalcitrant tenor imperatively asserting that on his part, with failing voice, and the burden of public disapprobation, he was wholly *dans ses droits* in leaving the stage abruptly. The breach between the management and two artists, with whom it was difficult to negociate, and whom it was next to impossible to control, was thus widened more and more; until, with other elements of discontent (not apparently prominent until the ensuing season) the chasm became so wide and deep, so impossible to bridge over by concession, that a rupture was positively looked forward to as a relief.

With a comprehension of this condition of affairs—when refusals of parts, "indispositions" to sing, and forced collisions, were of such frequent occurrence—it is curious to stumble upon a correspondence in such close but contrasting connexion with the recalcitrant artists. Letters are still extant, in which a noble duke and his duchess, who had been accustomed to show considerable interest in Her Majesty's Theatre, take the manager "to task" in good set terms, especially for not producing Madame Grisi and Signor Mario sufficiently often to please them. His grace complains of the "absurdity" of attempting to bring forward a singer "without the slightest merit," like Madame Rossi Caccia, and "that very ridiculous man, Monsieur Barroilhet" (alluding to the favourite baritone of the Great French Opera), and warns the manager that, under such a system, "persons of rank and

fashion" will "no longer frequent the opera;" that, as an inevitable consequence, even my "*Railroad people, who come up and take boxes*" (underlined in the original text), and "for whom so much is done," will "desert the theatre;" and that "the property will become valueless;" finally he announces his intention of disposing of his box, and threatens me with further remonstrance. This latter threat is speedily followed up by a species of "round robin," signed by seventeen "influential subscribers," who express their "dissatisfaction at the absence of Signor Mario and Madame Grisi from the stage" so frequently; understand with regret that, "in a forthcoming opera, these artists are to be excluded from any share in the performance," and inform the lessee, that a course, so prejudicial to the interest of the subscribers, will, if persevered in, compel them "to make a different arrangement with regard to the opera another season." The lady writes in a somewhat less imperative strain, but states that, "finding the system of giving all good representations on a Thursday still pursued," and not having the enjoyment of Mario and Grisi as frequently as suits her grace's views, she has "begged the duke not to complete the purchase of his box," as she would "rather be without one, than always be disappointed." "A royal duchess," she continues to observe, "authorises her to express a similar dissatisfaction," and she winds up by suggesting sundry operas that would please her better than those already advertised. In my answers to these extraordinary and angry remonstrances, addressing the duke, I enumerate sundry new operas in which both Mario and Grisi have declined to take the parts offered them; show that, as regards the "forthcoming opera," "I Lombardi," long previous to

the principal part having been given to another *artiste*, Madame Grisi had declined to take it; and that, as regards "Roberto Devereux," it was at Madame Grisi's request that the part of the *Queen* had been given to another. I then call his grace's attention to the fact that, of twenty-five "subscription nights," Madame Grisi has appeared in fifteen; whilst, of the remaining ten, Madame Castellan has appeared in six, Madame Rita Boria in two only, Madame Rossi Caccia in two; that Signor Mario has appeared in thirteen performances, Signor Corelli in two, and Signor Moriani in eleven, from which I beg leave to deduct the parts of *Pollione* in "Norma," and *Carlo* in "Linda di Chamouni," since, whenever those operas were given, Signor Mario had "requested to be excused" from playing them, as heretofore. To the duchess a similar answer is made, expressing at the same time my sorrow at not having secured her grace's "unalloyed approbation," and assuring her, that from the beginning of the season up to that period, nothing had been given on an "extra night" that had not already been presented on a "subscription night," with one trifling exception, caused by the desire of the manager to meet the wishes of that very same royal duchess, whose "dissatisfaction" her grace was "authorised to express." I have reason to think that such explanations *did* prove satisfactory, and that "the kind and considerate feeling" of both their graces *did* induce them to form "a more favourable opinion of my exertions."

Unjustly and heavily as these reproaches fell, they formed but items in the general rage for remonstrances, complaints, attacks, and requirements, not unfrequently conflicting and contradictory.

The manager of Her Majesty's Theatre was evidently considered fair game for persecution, and persecuted he accordingly was. Some obliging gentlemen, who would have blushed to ask for money at his hands, would, with the greatest coolness, press him and expect him to make engagements with artists, not only involving considerable and immediate pecuniary loss, but fraught with eventual disastrous consequences. Should such requests be refused, the offended *dilettanti* vowed eternal enmity, and the exercise of all their "power and influence" against the obstinate manager. A rather more exceptional case is the expression of "astonishment and disgust" on the part of an *habitué*, at the omission of *his* favourite air on one occasion (the air having been omitted for reasons of decorum), and his threat to "warn the public," through the public prints, if the omission should ever occur again. Others demanded the re-instalment of certain *coryphèes* dismissed for reasons of discipline. Another, again, to please his individual fancy, calls for an entire ballet for Taglioni, who ought not to appear before *him* in a mere *divertissement!* "Old subscribers" insist on changes in the performance, and announce their displeasure if the demand be not immediately met. "Club men" protest against operas that *they* consider "a bore." Men of influence want the chief singers, otherwise engaged, to sing at their private concerts, and think a change of performance for this purpose a mere trifle, such as may be granted without remonstrance or hesitation.

Anonymous letters of advice and denunciation arrive in legion guise, promising a host of concealed enemies if advice should be overlooked, or denunciation disregarded. In the midst of all these various untoward vexations,

arise more serious considerations, often most perplexing to the management.

Alterations in the programme of a night's performance are constantly suggested, changes in the announcements desired, and demands, not easily gratified but difficult to refuse, perplex the already oppressed manager. Now it is desired that the "*divertissement* should take place after the first act,"—now, that the "*divertissement* should be shortened, but the *Viennoises* left untouched;" now again, that "the children should dance only once, *between* the acts, and perhaps twice afterwards, in order that the 'Minuet de la Cour,' or some favourite *pas* may appear earlier." Then comes a "strongly expressed wish" that "the dancing should be curtailed;" on another occasion, that it be suppressed altogether. Once more, the bill must be changed, for the performance of "Cosi fan Tutte," or "Otello," or "The Desert."

To meet these wishes, so continually expressed, was my earnest desire; but the difficulty of compliance was often found insurmountable, when the conflicting interests and demands of the subscribers, of the public at large, and of the artists themselves, were all to be weighed in the balance.

How I ever was able to thread my way through this entangled labyrinth, can only be understood—if understood it ever can be—by those who themselves have adventured upon similar paths! And in the midst of all this embarrassment, quarrels have to be settled with influential noblemen, because their friends, or members of their family, have been refused entrance for not being in strict "evening dress." Then there is the old, old grievance, still ever new—of the demands of artists for unreasonable outlays on dresses, for particular dressing

rooms, boxes, &c.; then "indispositions," slights, or preferences—the querulous remonstrances from gentlemen because some solicited interview has not been immediately granted. Again, complaints from rival managers, that *coryphées* or choristers have broken engagements with them, and have gone to Her Majesty's Theatre; then quarrels about tittle-tattle scandal and acrimonious female jealousies behind the scenes; then quarrels with would-be "fine gentlemen" and press critics, who desire exclusive privileges, and when refused dip their pens in the bitterest gall. Quarrels serious—quarrels about nothing—all adding to the conflict of government, and the wear and tear of mind and body, and lasting to the end of my management.

Compensations in some degree for all these distresses, troubles, and heart-sores are not wanting, certainly, during the season of 1845. Financial success is a great balm; and to a right-thinking man, a still greater may be found in the favourable testimony of those whom he seeks to please. Letters innumerable from well-wishers, some thoroughly unknown as well as independent, lie in too mountainous a store to be touched upon. I receive a snuff-box from the Dowager Queen Adelaide, in acknowledgement not only of my "obliging attention and ability" on the occasion of a juvenile *fête* given by Her Majesty at Marlborough House, where the *Danseuses Viennoises* executed some of their favourite *pas*, but with a grateful sense "of my general services." Amongst other testimonials I must not omit that of Mr. Mitchell, of Bond Street who, on his own part, offers me a handsome vase, in acknowledgment of "the high ability and the liberality with which the general arrangements of the opera seasons have been conducted." Above all I

would mention a magnificent testimonial from the artists of the establishment—a worthy precursor of the still more valuable testimonial from "the subscribers" received during the following season. The presentation of this testimonial was, perhaps, the most gratifying incident of the year. It was spontaneously "got up" by the co-operation of all the artists, in both the operatic and the choreographic departments of the theatre—with the exception of *two* notable names, including that of Signor Costa, the musical director—and was presented to me on the 18th of July, with the following inscription :—"*Hommage à Monsieur B. Lumley, par les artistes du Théâtre de Sa Majesté, en commemoration de l'heureux événement qui assure à ce Théâtre la continuation de sa bienveillante et juste administration.*"

The "*heureux événement*," to which reference is made by this testimonial, was the purchase of the Opera House from the assignees of Mr. Chambers, completed by myself during this year (1845). This event, so important in the history of my management, must not be dismissed without some explanation in detail.

Independently of the confusion attending the bankruptcy of Mr. Chambers, the affairs of the opera-house had been for many long years involved in seemingly inextricable and interminable litigation. Actions in all possible Courts of Law, Chancery suits, bankruptcies—every species of what the uninitiated would class under the general appellation of "bewilderment"—encumbered the property on all sides. To sweep the Augean stables of Her Majesty's Theatre clean of all this mass of legal rubbish, had been the Herculean task which I had inherited from the first period of my assumption of the management. Slowly had I proceeded towards an

end which most men declared unattainable, during all these years. My endeavours were by degrees rewarded by progress, and light gradually dawned through the legal miasma which had so long surrounded me. But although I thus seemed approaching the desired end, the completion of the sale was long retarded by the impossibility of any settlement being come to between the assignees of Mr. Chambers and the representatives of Mr. Waters. It was necessary to await the result of an appeal pending in the House of Lords, between the parties with whom conciliation and compromise appeared impossible. The investigation of the title, and the arrangement of the various and conflicting interests having claims upon the property, were in themselves but huge portions of the gigantic work. It was by virtue of a decree of the Court of Chancery, at last, that I was able to complete my contemplated purchase. The assignment of the property by the assignees was eventually made out, and the purchase money paid over to them by me on the 24th July—the very day on which the great *Pas de Quatre*, the other notable event of the season, was to be produced.

I had to raise a portion of the capital, which amounted to the sum of £105,000, and therefore disposed of certain of the boxes to members of the aristocracy, and men of fashion and standing, for a term of years—a proceeding by no means novel, and not unfrequently employed by those who had previously rendered themselves possessors of this vast property. Setting aside the value of this pecuniary assistance, the sale of boxes was regarded, at the time, as forming a permanent bond of connexion between many influential men of the day and the fortunes of Her Majesty's Theatre, while it afforded

evidence of the confidence and esteem with which the existing management was regarded.

At last, then, after something like fifty years of bankruptcy and litigation, the property became disencumbered of its legal incubus—the clouds hanging ceaselessly over the opera-house were dispelled—and the ownership of the establishment, for all time (as it then appeared) permanently fixed in the hands of one whose exertions had, as it would seem, conjured light out of darkness.

With this event, of deep interest to all concerned, the record of the stirring and prosperous season of 1845 may now be brought to a close.

CHAPTER XII.

Season of 1846—The Theatre embellished anew—Germs of disagreement between the Direction and Signor Costa—Retirement of the latter from his post in the Orchestra—Grounds of the rupture between him and the Director—Mr. Balfe appointed in place of Signor Costa—Rumours relative to the rise of a Rival Establishment—Symptoms of secession on the part of *La Vieille Garde*—Lablache holds fast by "Her Majesty's"—Efforts made to bring back Rubini—Verdi's Music advances in Popular Estimation—He undertakes to compose an opera for Her Majesty's Theatre, but fails on account of ill-health—"Nabucco," its success—Remarks on the injurious effect of alterations in the Story—The old Répertoire resumed, with the leading Artists, after Easter, with the addition of "I Lombardi" of Verdi—Furious opposition waged against Verdi—The *libretto* bad—The Ballet of "Lalla Rookh," splendid decorations bestowed upon it—Arrival of Taglioni—"La Gitana"—"Pas des Déesses"—Review of the Season, ending with a "Row" at the Theatre—Early negotiations with Jenny Lind.

PREVIOUSLY to the opening of the season of 1846, I had entirely renovated and freshly decorated my new property, at a cost of £10,000. In some degree I was rewarded for my pains; since the season of 1846 proved, like that of 1843, 1844, and 1845, eminently successful in a financial as well as an artistic point of view. But it was destined to be one of the most harassing and troublous periods of my management, as will be readily understood when I state, that in this season was projected that disastrous secession which prepared the way for the establishment of a second Italian Opera.

The "secession move" began in an unexpected quarter. Some time before the opening of the theatre, the musical "world" of London was suddenly startled by the announcement that Signor Costa was no longer to be the musical conductor of the Italian Opera, and that Mr. Balfe had already signed an engagement to succeed him. Rumours were instantly afloat that it was solely on account of his having accepted the conductorship of the Philharmonic Society that Signor Costa had been displaced. Surmises to this effect having been stated and discussed in the public papers, I was imperatively called upon to publish a statement of my own. In a letter which appeared in all the daily prints, addressed to Signor Costa, I admitted that I had long since protested against the engagement with the Philharmonic Society, as "incompatible with the terms of Signor Costa's existing engagement, and with his duties at the opera," the extent of business at which demanded the "undivided attention of its musical director;" but at the same time I declared that I had already increased the salary of the conductorship at the opera by £200 a year (the amount offered to him by the Society), in order to obtain that "undivided attention" which was required of all operatic directors in similar establishments, and that I had never objected even to further increase of salary for the present year, to compensate Signor Costa for declining any offers made to him elsewhere. Under the circumstances, I remarked, I could only look upon the step which Signor Costa had taken as the result of a "foregone determination" to retire from Her Majesty's Theatre.

I then proceeded to state that the real cause of disagreement was, the intention of Signor Costa not to renew his engagement unless I would pledge myself to produce

regularly an original opera composed by my conductor in one season, and an original ballet, the music also by him, in the following year—a pledge which, for various specified reasons, I declined to give, especially when I reflected on the pecuniary failure which the opera of "Don Carlos," a work never repeated at any other opera house either here or on the Continent, had entailed upon the establishment. This letter, courteous, but decided in its tone, elicited a warm reply from Signor Costa, in which he endeavoured to show that all my objections were overstated; and this, in its turn, met with a rejoinder from me. But the fact upon which, as events turned out, the future fortunes of the opera-house so much depended, remained unchanged. Signor Costa ceased to be the conductor of Her Majesty's Theatre, and Mr. Balfe reigned in his stead. In a short space of time from the publication of these letters, vague rumours arose, succeeded by formal announcements, that Covent Garden Theatre was to be opened as a second Italian Opera. The secession of certain prominent and influential members of the company, it was apparent, had been long since resolved upon, should circumstances ever prove favourable for their establishing themselves in any other theatre than that of "Her Majesty"—a theatre where the manager had determined to be master in his own house, and would not be controuled by the caprices of his "company." That the opportunity seemed now to be afforded them of pursuing their fortunes in London under other auspices was clear enough, and there can be as little doubt that they considered the time to have arrived when long concerted plans might be put into execution. At all events, there were strong evidences on the face of the whole proceeding

fairly warranting suspicions that intestine intrigues were afloat, and that preparations for the coming secession were being actively carried on. Nevertheless, the names of Grisi and of Mario figured in the programme and in the salary list of the establishment, during the whole season of 1846; and internal differences were frequent even in the counsels of those who remained of the corps of *la vieille garde*. One of the most powerful members of the old coalition, Signor Lablache, protested against the whole scheme, and warned his younger colleagues against the error he conceived they were about to commit. This highly-gifted artist refused eventually to join in the plan, and, as is well known, remained staunch to the fortunes of the house in which he (along with the seceders) had achieved his English distinction. The coalition of *la vieille garde*—the object of Laporte's most lively apprehensions, and which had finally subjugated in some sort his once bold spirit, was destined to be quickly broken up by its own incoherence.

Excellent Lablache! Excellent as an artist and as a man. With pleasure do I pause from the record of schisms, schemes, and machinations to present a description of the illustrious basso, written by a friendly but discriminating hand, while he was at the height of his glory. He has now passed away, and to the young of the present generation the faithful description of one who delighted their fathers, and who can never be replaced, will surely prove welcome.

"Of all the reigning favourites at the Italian Opera, Lablache is the oldest and longest established amongst us. He made his first appearance in this country sixteen or seventeen years since, and from that time, with the exception we believe of one year's secession, he has

returned hither every spring with augmented favouritism. Sixteen or seventeen years is a long test applied to modern performers; and he that could pass such an ordeal of time, must possess merits of the very highest order, such as could supersede the call for novelty, and make void the fickleness of general applause. All this Lablache has effected. The public, so far from being wearied at the long continued cry of 'Lablache the Great,' as the Athenians of old were tired of hearing Aristides everlastingly called 'The Just,' elevates him, if possible, into greater favouritism yearly; and the management, if it for a moment contemplated such a change and could provide for it, dares not attempt to supply his place on the boards. But his place is not to be supplied: no other artist could half compensate his loss. Independent of his faculties as an actor and a singer, so great a lover is he of his art, that he will undertake with delight the most trifling character in the partition. Other actors and vocalists will not condescend to do this, or else fear to let themselves down by doing so. Lablache hath no timidities about assuming a lesser part, nor doth he deem it condescension.

"In the hands of genius the potter's clay can be moulded into as exquisite a model of beauty as a block of Parian stone can be. Assign to Lablache the meanest character in a piece—let him have the slightest foundation whereon his imagination may build, and he will erect a superstructure of no insignificant importance. Artists of questionable greatness may deem it a derogation to personate any save a leading part—Lablache feels he will not let himself down, he pulls up the character to his own elevation. From this it follows that no great singer within our recollection hath undertaken such a variety of charac-

ters. We shall find him in every possible grade of representation. From the loftiest tragedy to the most burlesque comedy he is equally great and efficient. From "Brabantio" to "Don Pasquale"—from "Marino Faliero" to "Dandolo." Through all the gradations of passion and humour he exhibits a superior insight into humanity, and with the finest dramatic artifice and discrimination, seizes on the most salient points and strikes them out into bold relief, giving life and verisimilitude to his abstractions. His tragedy is high-toned, calm, dignified, and expressive, and at times fraught with a most truthful energy. His imprecation on his daughter in 'Otello' is equal in power and effect to anything known on the stage. But it is in comedy that the whole artillery of his forces seems to be brought into play. As Dr. Johnson says, applying the phrase to Shakespeare, 'his comedy is *instinct*, his tragedy is *skill*.' In a comic part he fills up the stage with his acting, no less than with his voice and his size. Every character around him seems merely subsidiary. He is the sun of humour, about which the rest, as planets, perform their revolutions, deriving light and heat from him. He is the centre of *gravity*, that attracts all the laughing humours from his auditory. Yes, we say *gravity*, nor therein are we guilty of a bull. In his most whimsical efforts his countenance is as serious as that of a mid-day owl. While all around are convulsed with cachinations, his face is as composed as that of a Chinese mandarin, or a Spanish hidalgo's, when sitting for a genealogical portrait. His comedy is not sparkling and effervescent, like champagne, it partakes more of the flavour and body of tokay; you may sip it, the smallest taste is palateable. He possesses somewhat of the stolidity of Liston, with

occasionally the rich raciness of Dowton. His humour is as rotund as his person, and his person is a vessel of wit and mirth.

"Lablache's voice is an organ of most extraordinary power. It is impossible by description to give any notion of its volume of sound. He is an ophicleide among singers. One may have some idea of this power of tone when it can be truly asserted that, the entire opera band and chorus playing and singing *forte*, his voice may be as distinctly heard as a trumpet among violins. He is the very stentor of vocalists. When he sings he rouses the audience as the bugle does the war-horse, or as the songs of Tyrtæus reanimated the Spartans. With this prodigious vehicle of sound, his singing is distinguished by superior softness and expression. He is a great master of his art, and manages the lights and shades with judgment and skill.

"Lablache is a thorough musician, and no artist on the stage excels him in the knowledge and appliances of his art. He has written a work on the principles of singing, which has been published in England; and he was chosen some years since as the vocal instructor of her most gracious Majesty Queen Victoria.

"This artist is as great in person as he is in fame. He is nearly, if not quite, six feet high. His figure, though exuberant, is portly and commanding, and his entire head one of the finest that ever decorated a human body. Notwithstanding the opinions about him and the cognomen of 'old,' which for many years has attached itself to his name, Lablache is still comparatively young."

To resume my narrative. It was not till the ensuing

season that the fact of the intended secession came plainly before the public; but however outward appearances might be preserved by those seceders who were still members of my company, and still received their emoluments from my treasury, it is unquestionably to the period now under notice that the story, not only of its commencement but of its progress, rightly belongs. A brief recapitulation, therefore, of the principal causes of an event which cannot be regarded otherwise than as the turning-point in the fortunes of my management, may here be considered admissible.

Early in her career of triumph, the popular idol of the day, the adored *prima donna*, Giuglietta Grisi, not content with her ascendancy over the public, aimed at such a participation in the conduct of affairs as might enable her to direct the arrangements according to the dictates of her caprice. It was not the first time that a *prima donna assoluta* had grasped at such a tempting sceptre in the pride of her popularity, nor assuredly will it be the last. This design was unquestionably supported by the coalition of the *vieille garde*, who conceived themselves irresistible.

Alarmed at the ever-growing encroachments of the clique, Monsieur Laporte had conceived the design of breaking the bond of union at any venture. The first experiment was made, as has been already recounted, by the determination not to re-engage Signor Tamburini. It will have been seen how the intrigues of the coalition were made to bear upon the management, chiefly through female influence and fascinations, exercised over men of rank and fashion. They succeeded for a time, but when resistance was again applied, the attempt at their repetition failed. The minor weapons

of indisposition and ill-humour, then employed to thwart the management in all its chief efforts, produced only the immediate result—they could indeed have no other—of irritating and annoying; but they were of practical use in disposing the public mind to a belief in grievances. So far the clique had some success in the battles that were continually waging behind the scenes.

The chief instigators of the mischief having acquired a hold upon the public—legitimately won, it must be owned—were placed in a position of formidable strength. A further experiment was made on the part of the management by the removal of Madame Persiani, to offer room for novelty and the introduction of younger talent. By this step the *vieille garde* found itself sensibly weakened, whilst the management gained ground. Still the resources of the artist-body were far from exhausted, and a plan of secession was contemplated, to be put in execution when made practicable by favourable circumstances. The time apparently approached for the striking of the *grand coup*, since long before the opening of Her Majesty's Theatre for the season of 1846, positive statements of the opening of a second Italian Opera were to be read in all the public prints; the secession of Signor Costa being referred to as a prélude to the great event. The scheme at this very early hour was spoken of as nearer completion than was generally imagined. Certainly, the notices which appeared contemporaneously with the correspondence between me and Signor Costa, were strong intimations of that "foregone determination," taken in secret, of which I had complained. Thus the season, however prosperous from a financial point of view, was certain to be troublous, and fraught with unusual anxiety.

Long before the opening night, batteries were opened against me in sundry quarters, by persons who had considered themselves in any way slighted or aggrieved, as if in anticipation of the coming struggle. Even before the great wars commenced, and when there were but "rumours of wars," these skirmishers were in the field to launch their arrows at the management of Her Majesty's Theatre, in the interests of secession. The shafts of one of these hostile sharp-shooters, whose *amour propre* had been grievously hurt by some constructive incivility on the part of the officials of the theatre, were tipped with a peculiar venom that personal enmity could alone have supplied. It is curious, too, to see how a name, afterwards so intimately and gloriously connected with my management—that of Mademoiselle Jenny Lind, the great Swedish singer—could be used as a weapon of attack. Rumours having already arisen that this celebrated artist would be eventually engaged for the Italian Opera in the Haymarket, a flat contradiction was boldly given to them, with the evident aim of imputing to me misrepresentations, the journal employed for that purpose being engaged, heart and soul, in support of the rival establishment. It was not until the following year, however, that, on the reiteration of the same bold denial, a published correspondence took place, an outline of which will be found in its proper place.

In the midst of these hostile preparations, and in the face of the impending struggle, I was subjected to many disappointments and annoyances in my arrangements for the ensuing season. I had been for some time sustained by the hope that Rubini would consent to emerge from the retirement in which he had secluded himself, and once more resume his position on the Anglo-Italian

boards. As the time for the fresh season drew nigh, I wrote to the great tenor to remind him of a promise given during a journey we had made together in the previous autumn. This was, indeed, simply a promise to visit London during the season of 1846; but was it to be supposed that he could enter the doors of Her Majesty's Theatre without appearing on the stage? He was urged to undertake a brief engagement, with all the earnestness of eloquence, and with the assurance that his re-appearance would be hailed by all with delight. But the tenor insisted upon remaining "coy" in his retreat. He wrote me the most flattering letters; reiterated his assurance, that, *if* he ever did appear again in public, it should be at Her Majesty's Theatre, under my management; but he remained firm in his determination.

From another quarter came a fresh disappointment. In spite of the hostility to Signor Verdi's compositions expressed by the rigid critics of the day, there was an undoubted *prestige* connected with his name which excited curiosity and commanded attention. His success in his own country was triumphant—his fame was spread throughout the Continent. A new work, therefore, composed by Verdi, "expressly for Her Majesty's Theatre," was a legitimate object of desire; and terms had even been arranged with him for the composition of an opera, founded on "King Lear," the principal part in which was destined for Lablache. Rumours of the forthcoming operatic novelty had found publicity; and expectations were naturally raised. Here was in prospect not only an entirely new opera from a celebrated composer, but also a leading part for the greatest dramatic singer of his time. As evil fortune would have it, about this time Signor Verdi's health gave way; he was unequal to the arduous

task, and the opera itself was not forthcoming. A further change in the arrangements for the season was necessitated at a late hour, by the uncertainties that arose relative to the re-engagement of the "Fairy Troop" of *Danseuses Viennoises*, who had proved so great and lucrative an attraction in the previous year, and had been confidently relied upon as one of the prominent features of the season. Having learnt, however, that the cleverest of the children composing the *troupe* of the previous year had left Madame Weiss, their mistress, either to return to their own country or accept other engagements, and that their places had been filled by novices, who were being newly drilled, I declined to carry out the project of re-engagement. The question arising as to whether the contract between Madame Weiss and myself for the engagement of her little troop of dancers referred to the body as originally constituted, or to *any* ballet "troupe" she might provide, the affair eventually became the subject of an action brought by Madame Weiss, but subsequently abandoned. Meanwhile a further disappointment stood in the way of the manager, the opening of whose new season was now close at hand. I had entered into negociations with Heine, the celebrated German poet, respecting a ballet, upon the composition of which he was known to have been engaged. This project was again necessarily deferred; but the history of my negociations respecting it belongs more properly to a subsequent period.

And now, amidst all these *contretemps* and difficulties, anxieties for the future, and chequered successes in the present, the opening night of the season drew near. Grisi, Castellan, Mario, Lablache, Fornasari, Corelli, and

other principal members of the previous company, still figured on the list of lyric artists; and in addition to these were promised Mademoiselle Sanchioli, a *prima donna* of reputation from Rome, whose dramatic talents were said to be great, and a new *comprimaria* in Mademoiselle Corbari, whose beauty had apparently excited considerable sensation. The new names of Bencich and Castigliano figured also among the expected male singers. In the ballet "programme" were the seductive names of *the* Taglioni, who was about to take, once more, a "last farewell" of the English public—of Cerito, and Lucille Grahn, of Louise Taglioni, a niece of the eminent *danseuse* (not however the young artist who afterwards became deservedly a favourite), with a host of fascinating *coryphées*. Among the male dancers were the names of Perrot, the great *choreographe* as he was styled, and the accomplished St. Léon, attended by all their pantomimic satellites. In spite of the petulent criticisms of a portion of the press, henceforth ranged in the opposition ranks, the "programme" *was* pronounced a brilliant one: presenting an array that could not, in justice, be considered a "downfall" from previous glories, although this melancholy word was taken up and repeated in every shape and every shade of phrase, by the leaders of the new army of opposition.

Considerable curiosity had been excited respecting the new decorations of Her Majesty's Theatre; so that when, on the 3rd of March, the season of 1846 opened, the theatre was crowded in every part. Of these gorgeous, and at the same time tasteful embellishments, a general approval prevailed; whilst the aspect of the vast and elegant interior, in its fresh and magnificent array, struck every eye. Curiosity had been more legiti-

mately, although perhaps less eagerly, excited by the striking novelties which the first night of the season was to produce. The "Nabucco" of Verdi, a work which was popular on the Continent, and had in some places caused a perfect *furore*, was selected to inaugurate the new *salle*. That Verdi had already made way against his wholesale detractors, was rendered evident by the generally better feeling with which the music of "Nabucco" was accepted. In a popular sense, the opera was a decided success; the choral melodies especially suiting the public taste. The *libretto*, although faulty in many respects, was dramatic, and afforded scope for fine acting and artistic emotion. "Nabucco," in short, floated on the sea of the Anglo-Italian stage, where, whilst one current was always rushing towards novelty, another tended to wreck all novelty whatever in the interests of so-called "classicism." Much had been done to place the opera with splendour on the stage, but though it pleased as a whole, no decided success attended the venture of the two new ladies. Sanchioli, wild, vehement, and somewhat coarse, attracted and excited by her "power, spirit, and fire," but she failed to charm. As a "declaiming, passionate vocalist," she created an effect; but the very qualities which had rendered her so popular with an Italian audience, acted somewhat repulsively upon English opera-goers. The lack of refinement in her style was not in their eyes redeemed by the merit of energy. The electric impulse that communicated itself to the Italians, fell comparatively powerless on the British temperament. Sanchioli, however, was in many respects the "right woman in the right place," in this melo-dramatic opera. The other lady, Mademoiselle Corbari,

though destined in after times to please greatly as an *altra-prima* on the Anglo-Italian stage, and though she was considered from the first, charming, even "fascinating" in her simplicity and grace, was not yet acknowledged as a leading vocalist. The nervousness and inexperience of a novice, which she showed at this stage of her career, somewhat lessened the success due to a sweet voice and feeling style, though the prayer allotted to her character, *Fenena*, was encored nightly. Fornasari pleased those who remained of his old enthusiastic admirers, by his emphatic dramatic action and vigorous declamation, and thus far worked towards the success of Verdi's new opera. It is not unworthy of record that, in compliance with that repugnance which is prevalent in the English mind against any dramatic subject referring however remotely to biblical history, and which had already transformed "Mosè" into "Pietro L'Eremita," the "Nabucco" of the Italian stage was condemned to assume on this occasion an *alias* under the title of "Nino Rè D'Assyria." That the opera thus lost much of its original character, especially in the scene where the captive Israelites became very uninteresting Babylonians, and was thereby shorn of one great element of success, present on the Continent, is undeniable.

The new ballet of "Catarina," or "La Fille du Bandit," with an interesting and clearly expounded story, with striking scenery and dresses, with Lucille Grahn as the heroine, and Perrot as chief dancer, deservedly met with good success, and eventually reached to a "run" of considerable length. It was indeed one of the best constructed of Perrot's choreographic compositions. Thus the commencement of the season of 1846 might be looked upon as at once splendid, striking, and varied in

its attractions, although probably failing to conciliate all the worshippers of "a past," which arrogated to itself the title of the "legitimate."

On Tuesday the 17th of March, the "run" of "Nino" was interrupted, to give a trial to three young artists of some note, and of still greater promise. The opera of "Ernani" was selected, to enable Madame Pasini, Signor Castigliano (a pupil of Rubini), and Signor Bencich to appear, as soprano, tenor, and baritone, in the principal characters of that opera. All three failed, Signor Bencich alone being voted tolerable.

Few persons are probably aware that this Madame Pasini was in fact one and the same with Madame Gassier, later known here. Early failures are not always fatal. Madame Pasta's first efforts were altogether ineffective on her first appearance in London. She sang the part of *Emilia* in "Otello" and completely failed. A few years afterwards she played *Desdemona* in that opera, and achieved an undoubted success. "Nino" again resumed its course, and was played till the return of Madame Castellan rendered a change at last imperative, for the "rentrée" of a *prima donna*; already popular with the subscribers. She appeared on the 28th of March, in "Linda di Chamouni," and with her now habitual success. The representation offered no novelty, beyond the *début* of Mademoiselle Gaetanina Brambilla, a pleasant young contralto, in the part of *Pierotto*. Though bearing the same name, she was no relation, it was stated, of the more celebrated Marietta Brambilla; nor, although in many respects a clever and agreeable singer, did she threaten to rival her fame. Later, however, she made her way in Italy, and was esteemed an excellent

Azucena. After this "appearance," claimed by position and popularity, Madame Castellan joined her forces with those of Mademoiselle Sanchioli in "Belisario." In this opera, the opera of his *début*, Fornasari still commanded interest and applause. And thus the early season, with the pretty ballets of "Catarina" and "Eoline," ran on to its allotted term, with a certain measure of prosperity, satisfactory to both public and director, in spite of the growls of the opposition. The arrival of the great stars of the opera of that date, Grisi, Mario, and Lablache, duly took place for the season after Easter.

With these, then, commenced the resumption of the usual *répertoire*, and, as has before been stated, the season sped on prosperously to the end. There was little to call for remark in these performances beyond the notice of a customary success, and the ready applauses bestowed on the familiar operas. Grisi, Mario, and Lablache appeared, with all honours, in "I Puritani," which was followed by "Don Giovanni," "La Sonnambula," "Il Barbiere," "Norma," "Don Pasquale," "La Gazza Ladra," "La Prova," "Il Matrimonio Segreto," "Lucia di Lammermoor," and "Anna Bolena." Two novelties alone, in the operatic history of the season, call for more especial mention. On Tuesday the 12th of March, "I Lombardi," another opera by Signor Verdi, was given for the first time, with the names of Grisi, Mario, and Fornasari, and was illustrated by scenery and dresses, which at this period were considered unsurpassed. Here was again a success—nay, a great and noisy success—but yet a doubtful one. After the comparative unanimity with which "Nabucco" had been received, it seemed necessary for the forces of

the opposition to recommence the attack against a school which now threatened to make its way with the town. Party spirit on the subject was again rife. Whilst, by the Anti-Verdians, "I Lombardi" was declared to be flimsy, trashy, worthless; the Verdi party, and the adherents of the modern Italian school, pronounced it to be full of power, vigour, and originality. The one portion asserted that it was utterly devoid of melody—the other, that it was replete with melody of the most charming kind; the one again insisted that it was the worst work of the aspirant—the other, that it was the young composer's *chef-d'œuvre*. And in the midst of this conflict—so analogous to the old feud between the partizans of Gluck and Piccini—public opinion, as usual, seemed undecided and wavering, uttering its old formula of "Well! I don't know!" The music, too, was weighed down by a rambling, ill-constructed, uninteresting *libretto*; and it is really difficult, under such conditions, to sunder the merit of the musical "setting" from the demerit of the text. "I Lombardi," however, was played frequently, and even to crowded houses.

The other venture was an *opera buffa* of Donizetti's early time, "Don Gregorio," the *libretto* of which was founded on a French vaudeville. The music was light and sparkling, and the selection had been made to afford the great Lablache the opportunity of appearing in a new *buffo* part; one, too, in which he had been received with delight in Paris. But matter for attack was made out of this piece forthwith. The unfortunate *opera buffa* (capitally sung and acted by Lablache, Mario, Fornasari, and Madame Castellan), was doomed to execration. "Desecration of the stage," "insult to the

subscribers," "disgraceful buffoonery," were among the phrases launched against it with the force of a catapult. And so, "Don Gregorio," with all Lablache's racy humour, could not hold its ground.

Meanwhile the ballet had been struggling to maintain its wonted rivalry with the operatic department of the theatre. Lucille Grahn had been provided with her own ballet ("composed expressly for," &c., &c.), at the commencement of the season, in "Catarina." The turn of Cerito came next, in gorgeous fashion, with the great *ballet d'action* of the season, "Lalla Rookh." For this display of choreographic art, the most unusual and sumptuous preparations had been made. I even addressed a letter to the distinguished poet himself, Thomas Moore, entreating the aid of his valuable suggestions and advice, and was favoured with an interview, in which the poet expressed his views and his cordial interest in the new illustration bestowed on the creation of his fancy.

"Lalla Rookh" was at length produced, for the benefit of Cerito, on the 11th of June. The simple story of "Lalla Rookh," although exquisitely romantic, was not, perhaps, well adapted for the expression of strong pantomimic action, however suited it may have been for choreographic display and gorgeous accessories. In both these respects everything had been done to ensure success. Perrot had surpassed himself in invention and arrangement, and the management had been "regardless of expense" in putting the ballet on the stage. "Lalla Rookh" was, accordingly, an important event of the season! Another was the arrival of *the* Taglioni, who had hesitated, wavered, and finally consented to take one more "last farewell" on the boards of Her

Majesty's Theatre. She *did* come, and bounded once again upon that stage in the "Gitana." Now again the opposition was in full force. The future acolytes of Covent Garden declared her "a wreck of what had been,"—while admirers still hailed her as "untouched by time." The truth lay, of course, between the two extreme opinions. But, at all events, Taglioni became and remained an attraction to the theatre, and consequently a source of emolument to the establishment. Her powerful aid was fully felt in a new *pas*, that was intended to rival the celebrated *pas de quatre* of the preceding season. The glories of that famous group were not to be surpassed, it is true, or even equalled. But the *pas des déesses*, combining the attractions of Taglioni, Cerito, and Lucille Grahn, produced in a *divertissement*, called "Le Jugement de Paris," was nevertheless one among the "great sensations" of the year; was chronicled in enthusiastic terms, and pictured all over London, insomuch that its renown proved scarcely inferior to that of its more commanding precursor.

Altogether the season of 1846 fully maintained the lofty *prestige* of Her Majesty's Theatre, and its financial results were most satisfactory.

It had not been exempt, however, from the usual importunities in "influential quarters." Indeed, demands for the engagement or re-engagement of singers or dancers, demands for the loan of singers for concerts, and demands for favours, great or small, are the inevitable concomitants of opera management. Perhaps fewer of these interferences than had been experienced in the previous season, were endured in 1846; and thus far the wheels of the establishment rolled more smoothly

along. Still it is not to be supposed that the season could pass unmarked by its "row."

On Tuesday the 20th of May, a regular *émeute* arose in the theatre, which seemed to rival all former displays of the kind. The pretext for this vulgar riot was an apology which had been circulated for Mario's hoarseness, and for the non-appearance of Cerito, who was to have danced in the "Ondine," for which ballet "Catarina," with Lucille Grahn, was substituted. At these announcements a storm of displeasure broke forth, which lasted in full force for the whole evening. Thus much must, however, be said for the malcontents, that, although on this occasion the "indispositions" happened to be genuine, the same public had been so often gulled by the whims and caprices of great artists who had trifled with their indulgence, that they could believe in theatrical illnesses no longer.

No more serious consequences followed upon this "row," than angry commentaries in all the papers, from thundering *Times* to facetious *Punch*. Among the unusual notabilities who were present in the audience portion of the house on the occasion of the riot, were the King and Queen of the Belgians; the celebrated Ibrahim Pacha, of Egypt, and the Baboo Dwarkanauth Tagore, who, up to his death (which occurred in the same year), was not only an assiduous frequenter of Her Majesty's Theatre, but a personal friend of its manager. The name of Dwarkanauth Tagore reminds me of a remark which he once made in the course of a desultory conversation. Nettled by the difficulties that had been occasioned by some capricious *prima donna* or *danseuse*, I referred to the transgression of Eve as the origin of all the tumults in the world. "Ah!" said the

Baboo, "that's *your* doctrine!"—implying that his own theological convictions were of a less ungallant kind.

The season was now over, and yet some of the most arduous labours of the year were but commencing. Indeed this was a momentous crisis for the theatre. No doubt could be longer entertained of the speedy establishment of a second Italian Opera House. Well-informed papers stated, "upon the best authority," the amount of capital laid down for the enterprise; and, from time to time, recorded the enormous preparations going on for the restoration and embellishment of Covent Garden Theatre. A struggle for life or death obviously was at hand, and every nerve had to be braced to wage the struggle effectively.

For some time past, I had been inclined to secure the services of the "Swedish Nightingale," Mademoiselle Jenny Lind, whose fame was now ringing through Germany. But Mr. Bunn, who had established an English Opera at Drury Lane, had been already in the field. Early in the spring of 1845, this enterprising manager had offered Mademoiselle Lind, then at Berlin, an advantageous engagement at his theatre; and the young *prima donna* had signed with him a contract, which, some months later, she nevertheless declined to fulfil. Learning the secondary position of Mr. Bunn's theatre, she repented her imprudence, protested that she had been taken by surprise, and that she had finally signed in haste in an interval between her appearances on the stage, not knowing all the circumstances of the case; also alleging that she was unable, at so short a notice, to learn the English language sufficiently well to sing in it.

Unable, in the face of the impending opposition, to count upon the re-engagement of those principal singers

who formed the "front rank," I now turned my attention towards another direction, and naturally sought to secure for myself a "star" of such magnitude as Mademoiselle Jenny Lind. In a correspondence with Meyerbeer, at Berlin, in 1846, I had already enlisted the good offices of that illustrious composer, to try and engage the favourite Swedish *prima donna*. In the same correspondence, by the way, I expressed a desire to engage Tamberlik, a tenor singer, then unknown in England. When I made my proposition to Mademoiselle Lind, the young singer, little skilled in the difficulties of stage engagements, and alarmed at the possible embarrassments arising out of her contract with Mr. Bunn, wavered, hesitated, procrastinated, and seemed inclined, after a while, rather to run away from than to approach that formidable London, which appeared to her a quicksand, replete with dangers. The "Swedish Nightingale," in short, was evidently a "shy bird," difficult to lure into any manager's net.

Thus it will be seen that the autumnal labours of 1846 were fraught with doubt and anxiety. I had, however, laid out lures for other song birds; and as rumours had been rife that the Countess Rossi, once the darling of London as Mademoiselle Sontag, had thoughts of returning to the stage, with all her charms and graces and artistic powers unimpaired, I had written to her in the month of July, offering her, on her own terms, an engagement on the stage of her former glories—"cette scène où vous avez acquis tant de gloire, et laissé des souvenirs impérissables." This, unfortunately, never reached the lady, who was absent on a journey. It was not until two years afterwards that the prize was won. With Madame Viardot negociations

were likewise opened, but did not succeed, on account of the exigencies of her *répertoire*. Out of three sopranos, therefore, not one it seemed was likely to be secured.

With the clouds darkening the horizon of the future, and threatening a coming storm, I anxiously "trimmed my sails," and kept watch for any favourable breeze which might haply waft me into port. One encouraging circumstance was, that at the very announcement of the hostile opposition, influential friends had gathered thickly around me, tendering aid and sympathy, and each bidding me be "of good courage," Among the many letters that were showered on me, one from the late Lady Blessington ran thus: "I, for one, do not tremble for the result to you. Your friends will never forsake you for any other attraction, however great. The *locale* will, in itself, be a serious objection to the success of the new establishment, &c., &c.;" and again, the Duke of Leinster, always one of my best and truest friends, says: "I have heard that Monsieur Persiani has taken Covent Garden, for the performance of Italian operas. From the liberal manner in which you have conducted Her Majesty's Theatre, I feel that you ought to be supported." In this same strain wrote others among the subscribers. But the "situation" was indubitably a serious one; full of grave portent, and uncertain issue.

CHAPTER XIII.

Autumn of 1846—Rise of the rival opera at Covent Garden—Secession of the leading Artists from the "Old House"—Difficulties of organising a new Company—The Orchestra broken up in part by the change of Conductor—Engagement of Mademoiselle Jenny Lind as *prima donna* at Her Majesty's Theatre—Expectations afloat relative to a new Opera by Dr. Felix Mendelssohn—Obstacles to the appearance of Jenny Lind—Season of 1847—Contract with Mr. Bunn—Objections raised by the Authorities to the production of the Opera of "Robert le Diable"—How surmounted—The opening night—Gardoni—Rosati in a new Ballet.

THE excitement which prevailed previously to the opening of Her Majesty's Theatre for the season of 1847, was unparalleled. Probably, since the days of the great Glück and Piccini feuds in Paris—when hostile camps were formed by the partisans of the rival composers, and national "schools," contended not only with pointed pens but with sharp swords—there had never been known such acrimony, such furious disputes, or such an unscrupulous paper war as marked the commencement of the operatic year of 1847 in London. The social manners of England in the middle of the nineteenth century were indeed different from those which prevailed in Paris during the great Glück and Piccini feud. The battle was fortunately confined to words, spoken, written and printed, and there was no necessity to call for more trenchant weapons for the settlement of disputed

points than those wielded by the powerful hands of the great legal combatants of the day. It was, nevertheless, a stormy period, in which that mighty Æolus, the press, sent forth winds from all quarters—the loudest and strongest blasts being blown by those who thought that the surest means of conducting their own newly-rigged bark into prosperous waters would be to sink the good ship riding at anchor under the old colours. Of the violent statements, counter-statements, bitter assertions, and hostile denunciations which characterized the violence of the elements in these regions, some account will be given in its due place.

It is almost needless to state, that the loud wrangle was occasioned by the secession of the members of the *vieille garde*, hitherto the chief supporters of Her Majesty's Theatre in the eyes of the public, but at the same time the chief enemies in secret of my management. The secession was headed by Signor Costa, the conductor, who was followed by Mario and Grisi, and the names of Persiani and Tamburini were enrolled; the two latter considering that the slight of being no longer engaged at the original opera-house was a wrong to be avenged. In other words, it was occasioned by the establishment, under circumstances of unusually conflicting rivalry and ill-founded bitterness, of the opposition house, "The Royal Italian Opera at Covent Garden Theatre." This speculation (ostensibly, at least) was directed by Signor Persiani, known as an unsuccessful composer, and husband of the celebrated *prima donna*, who provided the funds, the artists singing at lower rates of salary, to assist the common cause.

Whether Art, as a field for commercial enterprise, should be brought within the operations of free-trade,

whether an unlimited number of speculators should be at liberty to establish any dramatic or operatic institution at their own risk, is not a question to be entered upon here. The history of the designs of a certain coterie of artists to obtain supreme power over the conduct of Italian operatic affairs in this country, has been followed step by step. It may be sufficient to add, that the ends and aims of this coterie were apparently attained by their transfer from the old house to the new lyric establishment. How far they were really attained, it is beside my purpose to inquire. Neither can I follow the fortunes of the rival opera, excepting as they affect more or less those of Her Majesty's Theatre.

The seceders had departed, to enjoy their triumph as best they might. Madame Grisi and Signor Mario had signed their engagement with the new establishment, without giving me any notice whatever. Signor Lablache, who had throughout protested against the schemes which he knew to be on foot, and thrown all the weight of his influence into the scale against the designs of his younger colleagues—Lablache, we say, remained staunch to the last to the theatre with which his fame in this country had been so intimately associated.

Many members of the orchestra had yielded to the persuasions of their old (and it may be added, cherished) conductor, Signor Costa, and had followed their leader of many years in his new enterprise—just as a band of condottieri might in the middle ages have followed an admired captain, who had taken service under a new sovereign. Some of the instrumental artists, however, remained true to their colours. Two of these announced their intention of remaining, in letters addressed to the public papers, wherein they protested against

the moral constraint that had been put upon them, a protest which elicited angry rejoinders from other writers, who had devoted themselves entirely to the service of the new establishment. That the question was not one of Free Trade *versus* Monopoly—that the cause was not in reality that of Art—was more than sufficiently shown by the marked partisanship and acrimony which distinguished the writings of the supporters of the second Italian opera. These fell thick upon the public from the very commencement of the year 1847; and in this spirit every previous announcement or preliminary notice concerning the ensuing season of Her Majesty's Theatre was immediately assailed by allegations, denunciations, and counter-statements, which even Touchstone must have pronounced tantamount to the "lie direct."

Two of the principal announcements, made in the interests of Her Majesty's Theatre, respectively referred to the engagement of Mademoiselle Jenny Lind, the celebrated "Swedish Nightingale," and to the composition of an opera by the famous composer, Dr. Felix Mendelssohn, expressly for Her Majesty's Theatre, an opera, founded upon the subject of Shakspeare's "Tempest," with a *libretto* from the pen of Monsieur Scribe. Both these reports were denied with singular acrimony by the Covent-Gardenite sharpshooters of the pen—and yet both were substantially true.

Mademoiselle Jenny Lind *had* signed an engagement with me (at Darmstadt) on the 17th of the October previous (1846). This fact was unquestionable. But the position of the celebrated *prima donna* with respect to this engagement was fraught with complications, some of them hazardous to herself, and certainly perplexing to

the manager. In order to explain this precarious position of affairs, it will be necessary to refer back to events remote from the present date, and briefly touched upon in the last chapter.

For some years the reputation of this extraordinary singer had been growing in Europe, until it had assumed such proportions as to excite unbounded curiosity in the musical world. Not only in her own country, but in Germany, Jenny Lind was already esteemed the great musical phenomenon of the day; and in the winter of 1844-5 she was singing at the Berlin Opera. She was a great popular favourite at the Prussian capital, and included among her warmest admirers the great composer, Giacomo Meyerbeer, one of the most fastidious and difficult of cognoscenti, now, alas! no longer amongst us. He had written expressly for her the opera of "Das Feldlager von Schlesien" ("The Camp of Silesia.") This work, I may observe, was afterwards re-modelled, and in part re-composed, in order to meet the requirements of the French stage, as the still more celebrated "Étoile du Nord."

It was but natural, then, that an active and enterprising manager like Mr. Alfred Bunn (at that time lessee of Drury Lane Theatre, where he had endeavoured to establish an English Opera), should have conceived the hope of alluring the "Swedish Nightingale" to his establishment for the winter season of 1845. Early in 1845 Mr. Bunn accordingly repaired to Berlin, and laid close siege to the popular singer, with the design of persuading her to make an engagement with him. For a long time the lady was coy and unwilling to consent, and was at last only "surprised," as she was wont herself to say, into putting her signature to his bargain. It was between the acts of an opera in which she was

performing that she was invited to the box of the English ambassador, adjoining the stage, and there she found the London manager, who held the proposed contract ready in his hand. Urged, it has been said, by the influential counsels of the ambassador, as well as by the entreaties of Mr. Bunn (then about to leave for England), wholly ignorant of the real state of operatic affairs in London, tempted by a most liberal offer, and having no one to consult, the fair singer took the pen into her hand, and signed (not, however, without grave misgivings) that unfortunate contract, which was destined to produce a concatenation of difficulties, embarrassments, and wearisome contests, during the following three years. It is due to the memory of Mr. Alfred Bunn to state that the terms of his contract were exceedingly advantageous to the lady. She would have been higher paid than she had ever been before for an equal number of performances; and the ambassador was justified in the opinion which he is understood to have expressed, that Mademoiselle Lind would consult her own interest in closing with Mr. Bunn's liberal offers. Scarcely was the deed done when it was bitterly regretted. One of Mr. Bunn's original stipulations had been, that Mademoiselle Lind should sing in English the "Feldlager von Schlesien," which was to be translated into the language for that purpose. Mistrustful of her powers of acquiring the foreign tongue, mistrustful of herself, ill-satisfied with all the circumstances of the connection, the lady sought to avoid the fulfilment of her rash and hasty promise. Circumstances soon arose to increase her uneasiness.

In the autumn of the same year (1845), the now widely celebrated cantatrice was delighting the public of

Frankfort by her talent, when accident threw her in the way of an English lady, closely allied to a Swedish family with whom she had been intimate at Stockholm. In the course of conversation, Mademoiselle Lind became aware that the true and fitting arena for her talent in London was the stage of Her Majesty's Theatre. Although far from sanguine as to her own success in England, she was at least anxious to liberate herself from an engagement contracted hastily and under an erroneous impression; and her newly-acquired friend was shortly afterwards invested by her with full powers to treat with Mr. Bunn for a release from her contract. Negociations were consequently opened with Mr Bunn, who, far from showing himself at all unreasonable, proposed at first the apparently moderate condition that Mademoiselle Lind should pay him either the sum of £500, as a forfeit for breach of contract, or £300, coupled with the promise to sing for him one night at his theatre gratis. These terms were considered so acceptable by the friend of the fair singer, that their ratification by Mademoiselle Lind was confidently expected. Unfortunately, the young lady, ignorant, it may be presumed, of the ways of the world, and of her own real position, replied only by a letter addressed to the manager of Drury Lane, in which she appealed to his "generosity" to grant her an unconditional surrender of the contract: urging that in an unguarded moment an engagement had been extorted from her of which she now saw the imprudence, and putting it to him as a man of honour and feeling to release her from her bond. Such a proposition was manifestly untenable; and by this ill-advised step on the part of Mademoiselle Lind, the negociations which had been conducted in so

amicable and promising a manner on behalf of the *prima donna* necessarily terminated.

The period fixed by Mademoiselle Lind's engagement with Mr. Bunn having passed away, the affair had become only a question of damages. In October, 1846, I made more than one attempt to secure the services of the celebrated Swedish Nightingale; but these attempts were made in vain. The young singer had conceived so inordinate a dread of Mr. Bunn's vengeance, and of his intentions to persecute her with newspaper attacks and other means of annoyance, on account of the "breach of promise," that she could not overcome her repugnance to visit the shores of England. Still I did not despair, and following Mademoiselle Lind from Frankfort to Stuttgardt, and thence to Darmstadt, I at last succeeded in prevailing on the coy songstress to contract an engagement at my theatre. Here I had to employ all my best ability. Besides holding out to her the most brilliant prospects both of fame and fortune, I went so far as to undertake to bear any loss that might fall upon her in the event of a law-suit with Mr. Bunn.

The terms of this engagement were far superior to any hitherto offered to the celebrated singer. She was offered 120,000 francs (£4800) for the season, reckoned from the 14th of April to the 20th of August, besides a house free of charge, and a carriage and pair of horses to be at her disposal; a further sum of £800, should she be inclined to pass a month in Italy, for study or repose, prior to her *début* at Her Majesty's Theatre; lastly, the liberty to cancel her engagement if, after her first appearance on the boards and her success falling short of her expectations, she felt disinclined to continue her performances.

It may be added, that the engagements between the contracting parties were conducted under the auspices of the great composer Mendelssohn, a man not only of tried probity and honour, but of excessive delicacy in all such matters. This eminent musician took the liveliest interest in the *prima donna*, and remained her staunch and valued friend till his death in 1847. Thus I had every reason to feel myself secure in the possession of a "star" whose fame and attraction might compensate me for the loss sustained by the secession of Madame Grisi, which was now certain to take place.

Early in the following year (1847), however, letters which appeared in the London newspapers proved that Mr. Bunn, though he could not hope to secure the cantatrice for his own theatre, was resolved at all events to frighten her from appearing at any other. The manager of Drury Lane Theatre published a copy of a missive despatched by him to Mademoiselle Lind at Vienna, in which, after stating that he, in common with others, had little faith in any prospectus issued by Mr. Lumley, he went on to say: "I do not believe you have signed any but a conditional engagement with the manager of Her Majesty's Theatre; deeming it impossible that an artist of such celebrity and character could visit this country, liable to the consequences of two attested contracts, and prepared to forfeit the first for another and a larger offer subsequently held out."*

To this, as conclusive evidence of the impossibility of Mademoiselle Lind appearing in the Haymarket, was

* This was not strictly the fact; the contract with Mr. Bunn being broken, and the time expired, there was no ground for charging Mademoiselle Lind with having broken it for the sake of a more lucrative offer.

appended a letter from the lady, dated as far back as October, 1845, in which she stated that the affair with Drury Lane would prevent her appearing at Her Majesty's Theatre. The publication of these letters was considered sufficient by the hostile papers (ever anxious for the future interests of the new Italian Opera at Covent Garden), to falsify the announcements made in behalf of Her Majesty's Theatre; and they even ventured to assert that the name of Mademoiselle Lind would in a few days "doubtless appear in the Drury Lane bills, officially."

It must be admitted, that, in announcing the name of Mademoiselle Jenny Lind as my *prima donna* for the ensuing season in my prospectus, I was not without just causes of apprehension and uneasiness. The stake was a great one. The fortunes of the theatre, in the face of the threatened rivalry, depended upon the successful appearance of the "Swedish Nightingale." It had been arranged between Mademoiselle Lind and myself that her *début* should take place in Meyerbeer's opera of "Robert le Diable," in her favourite part of *Alice*. The work being new to the theatre, extensive preparations had to be made. The full score was procured, parts were cast, new scenery was painted, and new dresses were prepared; and of these operations Mademoiselle Lind, who was fulfilling a winter engagement at Vienna (where she was the idol of the public, caressed by the Court and the society of the Austrian capital), was duly apprized. But the lady "made no sign." Time rolled on. The commencement of the season was imminent—but still no sign! And thus matters remained when the theatre actually opened its portals.

The other announcement, first put forward by

papers supposed to be cognisant of the fact, and afterwards repeated in the prospectus for the coming season, but strenuously and acrimoniously contradicted by the hostile party, referred to the composition of an opera founded on "The Tempest" of Shakespeare, by Mendelssohn, "expressly for Her Majesty's Theatre." In making this announcement to my subscribers, as may be seen from my correspondence with the great composer, I was as fully borne out by legitimate expectations as in my promise of Mademoiselle Lind's appearance.

Dr. Mendelssohn had long had "The Tempest" in view as a subject for operatic treatment. When, after my first attempt to engage Mademoiselle Lind, in 1846, I made a rapid journey to Berlin, I took an excursion to Leipzic, where I dined with Mendelssohn and his family, and afterwards went with them to the theatre. He then told me that he had in his possession a *scenario* of "The Tempest," which did not please him, adding, "Scribe is the only man who could treat this subject suitably for music." I do not refer to this conversation as affording a sufficient reason for announcing Mendelssohn's "Tempest" in the prospectus. A letter from the great composer, dated November 1st, 1846, and treating of the engagement of Mademoiselle Lind, in a friendly spirit to both parties, contained the following passage, relative to the proposed *libretto* of Scribe upon the subject of "The Tempest":—

"When I think of it," writes (in English) the illustrious composer, "I wish January had arrived and the *libretto* with it, and that I could go on writing already. If you do not send it later than the new year, I hope I might still be ready in time, and I begin even now to arrange my affairs accordingly." On the 2nd of De-

cember, 1846, he again writes—"A man like Scribe, with a subject like 'The Tempest,' must produce something extraordinary, something which I should feel happy and proud to combine my music with. . . . . I need not tell you that I shall set all other occupations aside, if I only see the possibility of finishing it in time—whether I may have it at new year or not." On the 19th of January, 1847, Dr. Mendelssohn announces the receipt of the *libretto* from Scribe, but feels now the "responsibility" of finishing the opera in time. He adds, however, "I shall try to do it, try with all my heart, and as well as I can." It is only on the 21st of February—long subsequently to the issuing of my prospectus, subsequently also to the imperative denials and contradictions of the parties hostile to my interests, to the effect that my representation as to an arrangement with Mendelssohn for an opera at Her Majesty's Theatre was "mere fabrication,"—that the composer expresses his conviction of the impossibility of his finishing the work "in time for the season which has now begun." He attributes, however, this frustration of design more to the "great want of sympathy" he feels "with the second part of the opera, as it now stands," than to the pressure of time. He announces his intention of being in London in the April following, and adds, "Should I have composed something till then which might be of any use to you, I should be truly happy in proving to you, more than by mere words, how sincerely I wish you success." In a previous letter moreover, dated the 4th of February, he refers to the newspaper announcements which have appeared, and says, "I still hope to confirm them by the final result, if I possibly can," and "I think it desirable (as well for

you as myself) that your friends should say, whenever the opportunity for doing so naturally presents itself, that the opera of 'The Tempest' is to be produced this season, *if* finished in time."

For the hindrances which eventually arose—hindrances caused by the composer's inability to "reconcile" himself to the second part of the opera, and by "the determination expressed by the author of the *libretto* to *adhere* to his portion of his work," I could not be held in any way responsible. It is clear, at the same time, from the correspondence with Monsieur Scribe, that the author of the *libretto* was willing to modify his plan and effect several changes in order to meet the views of the composer, much as he might wish to defend the dramatic propriety of his own conceptions. It is evident, however, from this singular and interesting correspondence (into which, unfortunately, it would lead us too far to enter in detail), that, much as composer and author might admire and respect the talent of each other, it was impossible to reconcile their peculiar idiosyncrasies. The German and French natures were in conflict. The more strictly logical and analytical spirit of the former seemed strangely hypercritical to the latter. The facile imagination of the Frenchman, however fertile in scenic resources (as was evidenced by the changes he proposed) found no response in the less flexible tenets of the German. Great in true poetical feeling as was the mind of Mendelssohn, he clung, in this instance, to a rigidity of sequence which it was impossible for the French dramatist to admit or comprehend, in a subject of "féerie." And so the two went asunder.

Statements, counter-statements, allegations, and refu-

tations on the two subjects mentioned above abounded in the newspapers, which, in certain instances, had adopted a rivalry as ferocious as that of the future Italian operas, long before the opening of the season. Party spirit ran high. Even the papers which asserted their impartiality with respect to what was familiarly entitled at the time "The Opera Fuss," almost invariably showed some sort of bias towards one side or the other. Among the mass of articles on the "Rival Opera Houses," which appeared at the time, a passage in a letter, which appeared in the *Spectator*, signed by "An Amateur," deserves quotation for its justness and truth:

"An opera without Grisi," it says, "was an idea not to be admitted. However, it is certain, not only that we shall see an opera in which that admirable artist will not figure, but also possible that the combination of talent to which her secession opens a passage may go far to indemnify the public for the absence of one so long and deservedly a favourite with them. One thing is clear that, complete as the performance of Mario and Grisi commonly was, we never could expect to vary the *répertoire* so long as the *prima donna assoluta* held sway on the Italian boards. A novelty, even in the vein congenial to her powers and taste, was accomplished with difficulty, and by dint of urgency; whilst novelties of a different school, or even revivals of disused compositions, not exactly suited to display the talents of Grisi to advantage, as she thought, were next to impracticable. She ruled the cast of the performances, therefore, at the same time obstructing the advent of rival soprani—for no first-rate singer could be induced to adventure a career in London whilst many leading parts in favourite operas, being in the possession of Grisi, were necessarily denied her."

Few there were capable of reasoning so calmly on the different circumstances of the rivalry. The direct and violent hostility of one paper of the period—the "portentous mouth of Covent Garden," as it was popularly called—requires, from the circumstances which ensued, a

record of its name. My published prospectus for the ensuing season met with such positive denials of its truth, and flat contradictions of its statements amounting to a charge of the "lie direct," in the now defunct *Morning Chronicle*, that I was compelled, in self-defence, to demand, through my solicitor, a retractation and a refutation from the editor of the paper, and even to threaten legal proceedings for defamation in case of a refusal. The articles of which I complained were those impeaching the veracity of the prospectus as regarded the engagement of Mademoiselle Jenny Lind, and treating the statement of an arrangement made with Dr. Mendelssohn for a new opera as "a mere fabrication." Redress, however, was refused, save in so far as the editor promised to lose no time in putting himself into communication with Mademoiselle Lind and Dr. Mendelsohn, in order to ascertain the accuracy of the published assertions of the paper. To this equivocal concession a retort was sent by the solicitor of Her Majesty's Theatre, in the following terms:—"It is much to be regretted that you did not adopt this course of inquiry, and obtain the certain and correct information, which you now find to be necessary, before you permitted the pages of the *Morning Chronicle* to be the medium of charges against Mr. Lumley." I was obliged to be equally decided with a private gentleman of influence and position, who complained "that he had become a subscriber under false pretences, since he felt positively certain that Mademoiselle Lind had no intention whatever of appearing at the theatre." He was immediately met by the offer of having his subscription cancelled, an offer with which he did not think fit to close.

Great had been the turmoil of discussion, and great

the acrimony of the new rival interests from the very beginning of the year, long prior to the appearance of the prospectus of Her Majesty's Theatre for the season. Louder still raged dispute and animosity when the prospectus was at last put forward. The "document" in question heralded a season of brilliancy and interest, well-fitted to compete with the attractions offered in the rival opera-house by the *vieille garde*, and even to run a course of triumph against all opposition. It contained the names of Jenny Lind, Madame Castellan, and Mademoiselle Sanchioli, with Madame Montenegro, and Mademoiselle Vietti as new acquisitions; Signor Gardoni —young, handsome, gifted with a lovely voice, and belonging to a good "school," one who had been fought for by rival *impresàrii* in Italy and France (and whose liberty had recently been purchased by myself from the Grand Opera at Paris, for the sum of 60,000 francs) was engaged to obviate as far as possible the regret of the subscribers for the loss of Signor Mario. To him was added Signor Fraschini, a *tenore robusto* of great Italian repute. The faithful Lablache was to resume his proud position at Her Majesty's Theatre, along with the famous German basso, Staudigl, already popular on the London boards. Coletti was doubtfully promised at first, but was destined, shortly after the opening of the theatre, to swell the ranks of a troop already strong in bass singers of fame. Besides these were announced Monsieur Bouché, the bass from the French Académie Royale, and Signor Superchi, a *protegé* of the composer Verdi, said to be a baritone of merit. Signor Corelli stood on the list as second tenor.

The operatic troop was apparently strong, and well fitted to sustain the threatened rivalry. Balfe still

conducted the orchestra. The ballet was powerful as usual in its attractions, perhaps even more so. To the established favourites, Carlotti Grisi, Cerito, and Lucille Grahn, was added (now for the first time) the name of Rosati—a name of future popularity—followed by a host of minor celebrities, many of whom were qualified to take the highest rank on any other boards than those of a theatre where the renowned goddesses of the dance all reigned supreme. Hopes were likewise entertained of a re-appearance of Mademoiselle Taglioni. In addition, now, to the established names, among the men, of Perrot and St. Léon was that of Paul Taglioni, a choreographe and dancer of celebrity and distinction. The ballet seemed in itself sufficient to ensure victory to the theatre. Among the acquisitions, new not only to the orchestra of Her Majesty's Theatre, but to this country, were recognised artists, such as MM. Piatti, Lavigne, and Anglois, who were certain to establish their fame permanently in England.

Thus, amidst unusual discussion, turmoil, and agitation, the season of 1847 at length commenced on Tuesday, the 16th February, with Donizetti's opera, "La Favorita," and an entirely new ballet, composed by Paul Taglioni, under the title of "Coralia." "La Favorita," although not entirely new to England, having been already performed at London both in French and English, was new to the Italian boards; and in its Italian form had all the interest of a novelty. Perhaps, thus given as it was with singers far superior to any heard in it in this country, and with a far more correct and powerful *ensemble*, the opera gained in popular favour rather than lost, through the familiarity of opera-goers with its melodies.

Apart from the unwonted interest attached by all the friends and *habitués* of the long-cherished establishment, to the opening of Her Majesty's Theatre in face of the new opposition, considerable sensation was excited by the first appearance on the Anglo-Italian stage of Signor Gardoni. Much had been said of the strange adventures that had befallen the handsome and gentlemanlike young tenor during his brief musical career. His first appearance on the stage raised a battery of opera-glasses from every part of the house; a murmur of gratified expectation followed. The success of Gardoni on this occasion was undoubted. Both his principal solos, sung in the purest taste and with perfect feeling, were encored with enthusiasm. The attraction of his performance was felt by all. Voice, style, and expression were there. His talent as an actor was alone disputed; for these were already days when a singer, however great his merit as a vocalist, was expected (and justly, on the lyrical stage) to be a histrionic artist also. It became the fashion among some *dilettanti* to say that Gardoni was no actor. Still, even as an actor he was pleasing. His manner, his bearing, his feeling, his conception of parts were blameless. He lacked only one element—power; he was not capable of bursts of passion.

Superchi, the new baritone, and Bouché, the new bass, were both favourably received. Mademoiselle Sanchioli was considered to have "toned down" from that exuberance of passionate declamation which had been remarked during the previous season, and to have somewhat improved in her art as a cantatrice. For passionate earnestness her powers never could be doubted. "La Favorita," in short, was a decided success.

The new ballet of "Coralia," cleverly adapted by M.

Paul Taglioni from La Motte-Fouqué's well-known romance of "Undine," introduced Mademoiselle Rosati to the English ballet-stage. Both as dancer and pantomimist she was hailed with applause, and established herself at once as a favourite. An easy rounded grace, combined with the requisite brilliancy of execution, constituted the merits of Rosati's style as a *danseuse:* as a pantomimist, she exhibited remarkable talent. The choreographic abilities of the *maître de ballet* himself; the successful appearance of the sprightly Marie Taglioni, his daughter; the *ensemble* of the acting, the story, the beauty of the scenery, and the lavish richness of the appointments, ensured for "Coralia" a triumphant reception which seemed to have restored for a time the ancient *prestige* of the lately-discredited ballet-pantomime, once the delight of the Anglo-Italian stage. There could be no doubt that Her Majesty's Theatre had commenced its new and dangerous season under unusually flattering auspices. Such an opening night of the pre-Easter period may be said to have been unknown in its annals.

CHAPTER XIV.

Season of 1847 (Continued)—Performance on behalf of distressed Irish—Nino—Coletti—Fraschini's *début* in "Lucia di Lammermoor"—Doubts concerning the arrival of Jenny Lind—Measures adopted by the Director to overcome her hesitation—His journey to Vienna—Opening of the Royal Italian Opera, Covent Garden—Lucille Grahn—Prevalence of sickness among the Artists; influenza—Certain Advent of Jenny Lind announced—Her arrival in England—Her first appearance as *Alice* in "Robert le Diable"—Warm reception given to her—Unbounded applause at close of Performance.

ALTHOUGH the public mind, as regarded the operatic season of Her Majesty's Theatre, was almost entirely absorbed with the anticipated advent of the eagerly expected singer, Mademoiselle Jenny Lind—an advent which, according to varied hopes or fears or interests or antagonisms, was considered certain, probable, possible, doubtful, or still altogether denied—the season previously to Easter sailed on pleasantly enough. Very early in the year it was enlivened by the excitement arising from a performance for the benefit of the "Distressed Irish." A committee of ladies met daily at my rooms in the Theatre, and co-operated with me in the arrangements for this beneficent performance. The proceeds, amounting to about £2000, were handed over to Lord John Russell, then Home Secretary, for distribution in Ireland; and the ladies forming the committee sent me a letter

expressing their thanks for my kindness, and for the assistance afforded to them in the conduct of the affair; signed by Lady Palmerston, Lady Clarendon, Lady Clanricarde, and Lady Ailesbury. On the evening of the benefit "All London" was present, from the Queen and Royal Family to the humblest inhabitant of the world of fashion who could find a corner in the vast assemblage. "Nino" ("Nabucco") followed, in order to introduce Coletti, who appeared in the part of the maddened king (previously so effectively sustained by Fornasari), and was welcomed with enthusiasm. A Mademoiselle Fagiani, who made her *début* on the same occasion, acquitted herself respectably in the small part of "Fenena," by virtue of a sweet voice, notwithstanding her nervousness as a novice. "Lucia di Lammermoor," on the 9th of March, introduced Fraschini to the boards of the Italian Opera, in the character of *Edgardo*, and restored Madame Castellan, always an acceptable favourite. The *tenore robusto*—the *tenore della maledizione*, as he had been named by Rossini, in reference to the great energy with which he pronounced Edgardo's curse, was likewise hailed with acclamation on his first appearance. It was in parts demanding strength and energy that this singer, whose great Italian reputation had raised such expectations among English *dilettanti*, most conspicuously shone. By these qualities he roused the enthusiasm of his audience, and thus formed a striking contrast with the other new tenor of the season, the graceful and tender Gardoni. In the "Sonnambula" Gardoni heightened the favourable impression he had made on his first appearance; whilst in "Ernani," Fraschini had an opportunity of exhibiting his more vigorous powers of passionate declamation. With Madame

Castellan in these operas, both the new singers achieved a success. A new *divertissement*, entitled "Thea," afforded both Rosati and Marie Taglioni opportunities of winning lavish applause and fresh showers of bouquets from admiring audiences. And thus the ante-Easter season, unusually filled with matters of interest, and unusually exciting in its programme, ran on to the end in its successful course, full of tokens of strength and vigour wherewith to maintain the struggle which lay before the management of Her Majesty's Theatre, in its impending duel with the Covent Garden Opera. But in spite of the interest and excitement created, the cry was still "Jenny Lind!" and the most eager questions were, "When will she come?" and "Will she come at all?" To explain these perplexing questions, to which no decided answer was at that time forthcoming, it is now necessary to go back somewhat in the history of events.

Early in March, my uneasiness as to the ultimate intentions of my *prima donna*, was once more awakened by indications of hesitation on her part, and renewed objections to make her appearance in England, founded on her dread of confronting the hostility of Mr. Bunn, sedulously kept alive by the Covent Garden party to whom in fact Mr. Bunn's rights had been assigned. In reply to repeated assurances that she had "nothing to fear," Mademoiselle Lind only protested that she could not start for England unless Mr. Bunn formally gave up the dreaded contract, and absolved her from all penalties. She had indeed been seriously assured that she would never be able to reach the doors of Her Majesty's Theatre unless guarded by a detachment of police. Again I reiterated my promises to bear her harmless against the consequences of an action; still she gave no

signs of a "move." Indeed, in a letter dated from Vienna on the 28th of February and signed by the hand of "Jenny Lind," which had been published in the newspapers of the day, an offer had been made to pay over to Mr. Bunn the sum of £2000 (Mr. Bunn having originally proposed a forfeit of £500 only), upon the restoration by him of the signed contract. "As I shall, in any event, come to London," so ran this letter, "I should prefer coming with the consciousness of having done all that depended on me; and I leave it to your choice and judgment whether you will prefer this arrangement to a law-suit, from which you will probably derive nothing." To this proposal Mr. Bunn had returned no favourable answer; the directors of Covent Garden, in order to carry on the war, having purchased his contract, with the right to make use of his name if occasion required. Whether, as it would seem probable, Mademoiselle Lind had formed an exaggerated notion of the power of the Drury Lane manager, and consequently of a possible hostile reception on the part of a London audience, or whether her hesitation arose from any other cause, she lingered on in a state of indecision which to me was most distressing. In this dilemma I had recourse to the lady friend who had, at a former stage of the affair, commenced a negociation on behalf of the young singer, and begged her "good offices." By chance, her brother, who had been on friendly terms with Mademoiselle Lind in Sweden, and who spoke Swedish with ease, had just arrived in London from Stockholm. This gentleman obligingly consented to proceed as "envoy" to Vienna, and to employ his influence in inducing the reluctant *prima donna* to accompany him back to London.

He started accordingly on this critical errand early in the month of March. The first news he transmitted to England was not reassuring. "Mademoiselle Lind was indisposed to quit Vienna, still putting forward her fears of Mr. Bunn as the cause of her reluctance." The mission seemed in danger of failure, and the fortunes of Her Majesty's Theatre mainly depending at this crisis on the appearance of the Swedish Nightingale, I became more and more uneasy. "Start yourself for Vienna. and endeavour to decide this wayward girl on accompanying *you* back to England," was the advice of the friendly intermediary. Inconvenient to the last degree as it was to quit the direction of the theatre even for a day, I saw the force of this advice—feeling that a juncture had arrived wherein personal energy could alone prevail. On the next night, at the opera, I entered (in evening costume of course) the box of my lady adviser. It was about ten o'clock. "I come," I said, "to bid you farewell. I have resolved to make the journey to Vienna. Pray say not a word to any one. In half an hour I shall be on my road."

In this perplexing state matters remained, when, the theatre having closed for the recess, the time arrived for its reopening for the season after Easter. The theatre did accordingly reopen in my absence, on the 10th of April. Meanwhile, an enormous advance had been made in the operations of the hostile camp. The "Royal Italian Opera Covent Garden" opened on Tuesday, the 6th of April, in spite of an effort made to prevent a catastrophe, so disastrous to the interests of the long-established Italian Opera. It had been proved by legal authority that, in consideration of certain monetary arrangements, a "privilege" had been granted to

the old "King's Theatre" for the "exclusive production in perpetuity of Italian Opera," and that "the value of this condition had been taken into account in the purchase of the theatre;" moreover, that there was a stipulation in the same document to the effect that the patents of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, granted to secure a home for the English drama, "should never be exercised for the purpose of Italian Opera." But the age was one when it was the policy of Government to discountenance monopolies of every kind. The objection was overruled—Covent Garden, as I have said, opened four days before Her Majesty's Theatre, and to all appearance successfully, for, in addition to the powerful *prestige* of *la vieille garde*, consisting of Grisi, Mario, Tamburini, and Persiani, the *début* of Mademoiselle Alboni was triumphant. The crisis was evidently formidable. And where was Jenny Lind?

In her continued absence every available resource was put forward. The theatre reopened, as has been stated, on Saturday, the 10th of April. A new opera and a new soprano singer were both forthcoming on the occasion. The opera, given for the first time in this country, the "Due Foscari," of Verdi, and the singer, Madame Montenegro, a Spanish lady of good family, with a clear soprano voice of some compass, and an attractive person, pleased, without exciting any marked sensation. Coletti, in the character of the *Doge*, one of his most famous parts, was, by general accord, pronounced to be an admirable, not to say a great artist; whilst Fraschini, by his energy and power, contributed to the effect of the *ensemble*. The first appearance of Lucille Grahn, on the same occasion, added to the *éclat* of a brilliant reopening. But the rivalry was powerful,

and again the general question ran around, "Where is Jenny Lind?"

It is a general truth, that however efficient a troup of artists may be, the expectation of a "bright particular star" about to rise in the horizon keeps a public in anxious suspense. Moreover, paterfamilias, who grudges the outlay, can put off his anxious wife and daughters with a promise to take them to the opera "when Jenny Lind comes."

"I Puritani" followed, with Castellan and Gardoni. Lablache, the true and loyal, made his first appearance for the season on this occasion, and was received with a *salvo* of cheers and shouts which evidenced an appreciation of his fidelity to the old cause, besides that of his transcendent merits as an artist. Coletti, as *Riccardo*, added to the completeness of the cast, which was in all respects excellent. But not even this excellence was sufficient to answer the standing question, "Where is Jenny Lind?" A new *ballet divertissement*, "Orithea, ou Le Camp des Amazones," for Lucille Grahn, however beautifully placed upon the stage and executed, could not allay the fever of curiosity and expectation. All seemed in abeyance. To add to the ticklish position of affairs, the three *prime donne*, Castellan, Sanchioli, and Montenegro, all simultaneously fell sick and, on this occasion, of real illness. The influenza was raging at the time. Madame Solari, a *comprimaria*, had to undertake the principal part in "I Due Foscari," in this dilemma.

Castellan first returned "to the rescue" in "L'Elisir," wherein Gardoni sang deliciously, and Lablache took his part of *Dulcamara*; the latter in himself a host. Cerito, who had arrived recently, Rosati, Lucille Grahn

—all of them danced and did their best; yet, spite of all, clouds rested on the theatre. Hope "deferred" rendered audiences indifferent to the very best performances. But one thought occupied all minds in the operatic world: "Where was Jenny Lind?" No one could solve the enigma!

At last there came a gleam of light through the cloud. Late in the evening of the 15th April, I called unexpectedly on "the lady intermediary," and startled her by my travel-worn and fatigued appearance. "What news?" asked the lady, eagerly. "Good," answered I, composedly; "I left them at Strasbourg early this morning (having journeyed post through the night), and pushed on alone. They will be here, I hope, to-morrow afternoon." My personal influence and remonstrances had fortunately carried all before them.

On the morrow, the long-expected *prima donna* actually did arrive, alighting at the house of this lady, where she was also welcomed by her cherished friend, Felix Mendelsohn. The Doctor had come to England in order to superintend a performance of his "Elijah" at Birmingham, and, by a fortunate chance, was walking with the lady of the house near at hand at the moment of Mademoiselle Lind's arrival. The much-desired prize was then won! Was it? The Nightingale was "caught and caged," it is true; but it did not necessarily follow that the caged bird would sing! Days passed by. The fatigued *prima donna* was allowed time for repose, and no effort was made to harass or worry her, although I was, naturally, "upon thorns." The Nightingale appeared on the evening of her arrival at Her Majesty's Theatre, in her friends' box, to which every opera-glass in the house was at once di-

rected. Consequently all London knew that Jenny Lind *was come;* and "all London" was on tiptoe with expectation. The young singer was shortly afterwards introduced to a few select acquaintances, and to Lablache, who encouraged her with kind words, and showed towards her an almost fatherly interest. But still she made no "move," fixed no day for her introduction to the stage, or for the commencement of the rehearsals which were to precede her performances. The opera-goers awaited (impatiently of course) the promised *début.* The theatre all this while was comparatively deserted. All depended on the appearance of Jenny Lind. A chance conversation aroused her to a sense of the critical position of the theatre and the consequences of her procrastination, which she no sooner understood than she said, "I will attend at the theatre on Monday next." From that moment all distrust and apprehension were given to the winds. Rehearsals were cheerfully and attentively followed up. The admiration bestowed on the performance of Mademoiselle Lind, by the conductor (Mr. Balfe), the band, and her fellow artists (especially of Lablache), seemed to revive her courage. All was now in train, and the eventful night arrived.

But before that night could arrive, another difficulty, which I had not foreseen, had to be surmounted. A few days after Mademoiselle Lind's first appearance at rehearsal, I received an official communication from Lord Spencer, the then Lord Chamberlain, peremptorily prohibiting the representation of "Roberto il Diavolo," though the work had been already performed by French and English operatic companies; and a melo-drama, embracing all the incidents of its libretto, had been brought out at the Adelphi, shortly after its production at Paris.

What was I to do? To have told Mademoiselle Lind of the obstacle at such a moment would have been fatal, for she had set her heart on making her *début* in the character of *Alice*, and would not have heard of any opera but "Roberto." Nor was this predilection founded on mere caprice—for she had said to me, "If the emotion takes away my voice, I can at least show that I can act—and besides, the *entrée* will give me a few moments to recover my self-possession."

I called on Lord Spencer, renowned as a gallant naval officer, but evidently inexperienced in theatrical affairs. Referring to the subject of "Roberto," he said: "Why, one might as well bring the devil and his horns on the stage at once;" as if the stage had not already been frequently occupied by "Faust," and his *Mephistopheles*, the "Frieschütz" and his *Zamiel*, "Don Giovani," with his troop of demons, serious and burlesqued. I explained to him that by this novel act of authority he was passing a censure not only on his predecessors in office, but likewise on all the courts of Europe; for which of them had not honoured Meyerbeer's *chef d'œuvre* with its patronage? At last, through the kind intervention of the late Mr. Anson, a man justly honoured with the confidence of the Court, I overcame all difficulties. "Roberto il Diavolo" was duly licensed, and the eventful night arrived.

Rarely was ever seen such an excitement even at that focus of excitement—Her Majesty's Theatre. The crowd at the doors might have led to the suspicion of an *émeute*, in a capital less orderly than London; and the struggle for entrance was violent beyond precèdent—so violent, indeed, that the phrase, "a Jenny Lind crush," became a proverbial expression. Nor was this crowd the result

of a hasty gathering. From an early hour in the afternoon, the Haymarket became so thronged as to be impassable to pedestrians. As for the file of carriages, it seemed as interminable as it was dense.

The brilliant appearance of the house inside was increased by the presence of the Queen and Prince Albert, the Queen Dowager, and Duchess of Kent, who had all come to witness the *début* of Jenny Lind.

On the entrance of the new *prima donna* as *Alice*, the welcome given to one who, though unknown, had already won renown, was unusually enthusiastic. For a few moments she appeared bewildered and "scared," but her self-possession returned. Her very first notes seemed to enthral the audience. The cadenza at the end of her opening air—the whole of which was listened to with a stillness quite singular—called down a hurricane of applause. From that moment her success was certain. The evening went on, and before it ended Jenny Lind was established as the favourite of the English opera public. Voice, style, execution, manner, acting—all delighted. The triumph was achieved.

At the end of the performance, the Queen, who during the entire evening had repeatedly manifested her extreme satisfaction, expressed to me her admiration in a tone and manner that showed how deep an impression had been made upon her. "What a beautiful singer!" "What an actress!" "How charming!" "How delightful!" Those were the exclamations that fell from the lips of Her Majesty, whom I had never before seen thus moved to enthusiasm.

If the interest in Mademoiselle Lind's *début* could have been heightened, I should have said that it was increased by the first appearance of the celebrated

German bass singer, Staudigl, on the Italian boards, in his famous part of *Bertram.* His success in this character (for which indeed he had been expressly engaged) was as great as it was merited, although his pronunciation of the Italian language was defective. He was proclaimed *the Bertram* of the Italian stage, as he had been of the German. Still it was impossible for him to occupy his merited position in the operatic "talk" of the day, when the public mind was wholly and exclusively absorbed by one object—Jenny Lind. Fraschini, in the part of *Roberto,* was, on the whole, satisfactory; whilst Gardoni, in the minor character of *Raimbaldo,* was charming, according to his wont; and Madame Castellan warbled the part of the *Princess* most melodiously.

The music of "Robert le Diable" was not wholly new to the London stage. It had already been given by English and French companies, but without ever creating that warmth of admiration which was considered due to the great work of Meyerbeer. In its Italian form it took its stand unequivocally, but the further record of its success must be reduced to the assertion that, the appearance of Jenny Lind proved a great and glorious triumph for the management.

CHAPTER XV.

Season of 1847 (Continued)—Successful course of the Establishment, aided by the Popularity of the Swedish Nightingale—A new opera by Verdi—Not generally approved by the Public—Resumption of the old "Repértoire"—Unprecedented enthusiasm excited by Jenny Lind's performance—The Ballet—Well sustained by first-rate Artists—Departure of Jenny Lind—Regret of the Public—Trial of Bunn *v.* Lind adjourned—Doubtful success of Covent Garden Season—Cordial support afforded to the Manager—Valuable Testimonial presented to him—Fête at the Director's Residence—Quality of the Company Invited—Noble and Artistic *Mélange*—Close of the Season—My Departure for the Continent—My first impression of the young *Prima Donna*, Sophie Cruvelli, at Rovigo—Opinion of her Talent held by Rubini.

I MAY assert without hesitation, while on the subject of Mademoiselle Lind, that the career of this great singer and extraordinary woman, throughout the whole of her operatic season of 1847, was attended by one unbroken series of triumphs. The numbers that literally stormed the doors of the theatre on every night of her performances, were wonderfully great, especially when the extent of her engagement is recollected. This grand professional success was aided no doubt by the *prestige* thrown around the fair Swede by interesting details given to the public of her private life. The report of her unblemished character, of her unbounded charities, and of her modesty—a modesty that

seemed to guard her against the indulgence of personal vanity—added greatly to the favour with which she was received by the English public, and gave increased lustre to her professional reputation. On all sides, and from all classes in the country, she was met by flattering testimonials of esteem and admiration. She was courted by the aristocracy as much as she was caressed by her private friends.

The Queen received her with marked attention. The Dowager Queen invited her to visit Her Majesty in private. Invitations, which she was as unwilling as unable to accept, were showered on her by the English nobility. The late Duke of Wellington was most sedulous in his demonstrations of respect and admiration, and on one occasion invited her to his country seat, promising that "music should form no topic of the conversation." But amid all the honours they lavished upon her, the shy *prima donna* invariably preferred the intimacy of her choice private circle, and was glad to flee the flattering incense sought to be bestowed upon her, by escaping to the country house of the kind friend who had first welcomed her in London. There she would heartily enjoy a ride, or rural ramble; and anon, seated among wild ferns and shaded by ancient beech-trees, she would study her new parts, the score laid open upon her lap. Every anecdote which transpired abroad, every detail which could be caught up, eagerly seized upon as it was by the "outside" public, contributed to throw a romantic halo about the name of the favourite *prima donna*.

Great as was the excitement produced by the *Alice* of Jenny Lind, it was perhaps exceeded by her next performance. In the part of *Amina*, in "La Sonnam-

bula," she surpassed all previous expectations. In simplicity, tenderness, and grace, in perfect impersonation, these qualities being combined with exquisite delivery of the music, she was universally declared to have beaten all her compeers "out of the field." Not only was she *the Sonnambula*, but *Amina* was generally looked upon as the culminating point of her unprecedently successful season.

Ably seconded by Gardoni, she stamped the part as her own, and threw a fresh charm over an opera, always beautiful, it is true, but yet "hackneyed" to the last degree. Scarcely less triumphant was she in her third character. "The worshippers of Jenny Lind—and their name is legion"—to quote the general phraseology of the newspapers of the day—"were supplied with fresh excitement by the appearance of the Swedish Nightingale in a new character—one in which she had been wonderfully successful on the Continent —that of *Maria*, in Donizetti's 'Figlia del Reggimento.'" The music of this opera, one of Donizetti's lightest and prettiest compositions, had already been dished up by fragments to the English public in various forms, though without much savour. On the boards of the Anglo-Italian stage, however, it seemed entirely new; the reminiscences of well-known melodies heightening, perhaps, rather than diminishing the zest with which the audience of Her Majesty's Theatre received the opera. The novel charm bestowed on it by such a "cast," and by an admirable performance throughout of the music, established "La Figlia" at once in favour. The acting of Jenny Lind, as the simple-minded and impulsive *Vivandière*, struggling against the trammels of conventional "fine-lady" life, again made a lively impression; whilst the

warmth and feeling with which she sang, with wonderfully elaborate execution, one of her airs, established the character as another of Jenny's triumphs. In the same category can scarcely be classed the "Norma," which shortly followed, being first given by "Royal command," on the occasion of a state visit of the Queen to Her Majesty's Theatre, on Tuesday, the 15th of June. Doubtless there was a great charm in the new version given to the character by the gifted young singer, who made an unextinguished love for the faithless *Pollione* more conspicuous than the rage of the deceived and slighted woman—in the bursts of emotion, which were rather those of agonised reproach than of implacable revenge—in the mournfulness rather than the passion of her despair, and in the tender resignation of her self-sacrifice there shone the great artist. But the English public, ever loyal to their idols, had been accustomed to another delineation of the slighted Druid Priestess. It had long gazed with emotion upon the burning passion, the withering indignation, and the imposing grandeur of Grisi, and could not be taught to relish a new "treatment." The interesting picture of womanly devotion, womanly anxiety and suffering, even of womanly forgiveness, as painted by Jenny Lind, however touching to behold, was evidently contrary to stage tradition. *Dilettanti* disputed, with psychological acumen on both sides, as to the respective truthfulness of the rival impersonations of Grisi and Jenny Lind; but the public remained comparatively unimpressed. The attempt, in face of a recognised and familiar type, was thought to have been a mistake. At all events, "Norma" could hardly be counted among Jenny Lind's unquestionable triumphs.

Still, the avidity to witness all Mademoiselle Lind's performances not only remained undiminished, but even increased. The newspapers of the day teemed with descriptions of wild scenes of "crushing, crowding, squeezing;" of ladies fainting in the pressure, and even of gentlemen "carried out senseless;" of torn dresses and evening coats reduced to rags. Whatever opera was produced the choice seemed to be a matter of comparative insignificance, so long as the great "star" but appeared in the horizon. Overcrowded houses could not be crowded more. Nevertheless, I considered myself bound to fulfil, as far as possible, the announcements of the programme, by the production of an entirely new opera, "composed expressly for Her Majesty's Theatre," in which Mademoiselle Lind was to appear.

The difficulties and unexpected hindrances which followed upon my announcement of the "Tempest," by Mendelssohn, have already been narrated. The great German composer had not wholly laid aside his intention of treating this inviting subject; but having differed with the *librettist* as to its construction, he found it impossible to complete his work for the current season. Ever since the engagement, signed by Jenny Lind at Darmstadt, I had been in correspondence with the celebrated Meyerbeer, relative to the performance of his "Feldlager von Schlesien" (Camp de Silésie), which opera had been expressly composed for her. To all my demands the maestro had cheerfully agreed, with the single stipulation that, in addition to Mademoiselle Lind, Staudigl should be engaged for the part of *Peter*. Staudigl (as has been seen) *was* already engaged, and had sung the part of *Bertram*. But again hindrances came in the way of the production of the "Camp de Silésie."

The composer was unable to visit London to superintend the rehearsals of the opera, as had been confidently anticipated; and, as the season was wearing on, it seemed advisable at least to postpone the production of his last work.

Of the expected new operas to be produced on the stage of Her Majesty's Theatre, that of Verdi alone remained available. For many years I had been in correspondence with the young Italian composer, for the purpose of obtaining from him a work destined for the London boards. An opera on the subject of "King Lear" had already been promised by Verdi, the principal part being intended for Signor Lablache. But, on that occasion, the serious illness of the composer had prevented the execution of the design. Verdi now offered his "Masnadieri," composed upon the subject of Schiller's well-known play, "Die Räuber," and with this proposal I was obliged to close. On Thursday, July 2nd, "I Masnadieri" (after wearying rehearsals, conducted by the composer himself), was brought out, with a cast that included Lablache, Gardoni, Coletti, Bouché, and, above all, Jenny Lind, who was to appear for the second time only in her career, in a thoroughly original part composed expressly for her.

The house was filled to overflowing on the night of the first representation. The opera was given with every appearance of a triumphant success: the composer and all the singers receiving the highest honours. Indeed, all the artists distinguished themselves in their several parts. Jenny Lind acted admirably, and sang the airs allotted to her exquisitely. But yet the "Masnadieri" could not be considered a success. That by its production I had adopted the right course,

was unquestionable. I had induced an Italian composer, whose reputation stood on the highest pinnacle of continental fame, to compose an opera expressly for my theatre, as well as to superintend its production. More I could not have done to gratify the patrons of Italian music, who desired to hear new works.

It may be stated, in confirmation of the judgment of the London audience, that "I Masnadieri" was never successful on any Italian stage. The *libretto* was even worse constructed than is usually the case with adaptations of foreign dramas to the purpose of Italian opera. To Her Majesty's Theatre the work was singularly ill-suited. The interest which ought to have been centred in Mademoiselle Lind was centred in Gardoni; whilst Lablache, as the imprisoned father, had to do about the only thing he could not do to perfection—having to represent a man nearly starved to death.

Since it was impossible to entertain any sound hopes of attraction from Verdi's "last new" opera, Mademoiselle Lind returned to her wonted triumphs (as did the theatre to its wonted "crushes"), by resuming the parts in which now, as heretofore, she was sure to be rapturously hailed by the public. To these was added the *Susanna* of the "Nozze di Figaro," to which character she brought not only her customary and recognised qualities as an accomplished singer, but the true Mozartian traditions. With these her early training had rendered her familiar, and subsequent study had confirmed the lesson.

It was new to the public to listen to a singer so thoroughly imbued with the genius of Mozart, in one of his *chefs d'œuvre*. Unlike many Italian singers,

who considered that, in faithfully executing Mozart, they sacrificed themselves to the exigencies of an old-fashioned English predilection, Jenny Lind revelled in her music. Her whole soul was in the work. Nor did Lablache, Staudigl, Coletti, and Madame Castellan fail to ensure, by their valuable performance, the completeness with which "Le Nozze di Figaro" was given during this season.

English connoisseurs would be astonished to learn how little Mozart was a few years ago known among the Italians. Mademoiselle Faggiani furnishes a case in point. She had to play the small part of *Marcellina* in "Le Nozze di Figaro," and was tempted to increase its importance by the addition of a cadenza to her four lines of music. The conductor, at rehearsal, told her that the composer forbade innovations, and to this authority she seemed disposed to yield. But having made inquiries on the subject, she bitterly complained of the conductor, saying that he had told her an untruth. She had ascertained that Signor Mozart had not forbidden the cadenza after all—in fact, he was dead.

It had been necessary, meanwhile, to give operatic performances, in which the *prima donna* of the season did not sing. Never were the evenings better entitled to the theatrical term of "off nights" than those on which Jenny Lind was allowed repose, or time for study. Although everything was done by the management to give these "off" nights all available attraction, such was the absorbing interest universally felt by the frequenters of Her Majesty's Theatre for one star alone, that they claimed but little notice. The "Lucia" was played, with Castellan and Fraschini; likewise, "Er-

nani," "I Lombardi," and "L'Elisir d'Amore," upon an occasion when Mademoiselle Lind was indisposed. So great was the disappointment occasioned by this incident, that it was deemed necessary to give an extra subscription night to compensate the subscribers for their loss.

The return of Carlotta Grisi to the boards, in her famous part of *Esmeralda*, was indeed looked upon as something like an event. In "Giselle," also, she did her best to make herself attractive. Cerito bounded through the "Ondine" with her customary success; Rosati won more and more on popular favour; and in a beautiful little *divertissement* invented by the ingenious Perrot, and called "Les Elements," all three were combined in an *ensemble* as brilliant as that which in the "Pas des Déesses" had proved one of the leading attractions of the previous season. There is no doubt that a certain amount of excitement, and even enthusiasm, was created among the votaries of the ballet (and they were still many) by this combination. Taglioni—*the* Taglioni—actually once more appeared, bringing with her the far-famed "Pas de Quatre" (in which Rosati took the place of Lucille Grahn), and once more secured a triumph. The old demonstrations followed—evidences of the old fever of delight—the old shouts, plaudits, and recalls. But resplendent as were still the glories of the ballet at Her Majesty's Theatre, there can be little question that during the season of 1847 all was eclipsed by the surpassing attraction of the great magnet, "Jenny Lind."

Thus the season of 1847, which had opened in face of the new rivalry, under such doubtful auspices, turned out a prosperous one for Her Majesty's Theatre;

at least it was so from the moment of Jenny Lind's arrival. Still I should observe that although the receipts due to her attraction were unquestionably very large, yet the extra expenditure entailed upon the management by uncertainties, difficulties, legal proceedings, and journies, all arising out of vacillation and fears on the part of the *prima donna*, was likewise so enormous, as fully to keep pace with the receipts. Never had operatic matters been so completely the absorbing topic of the day, and, within the memory of opera-goers, never had *prima donna* so exclusively captivated the attention, and commanded the interest of all classes. After her nights of triumph, the last of which roused the audience to a demonstration utterly unprecedented, the "Swedish Nightingale" winged her way back to her native land, not however without leaving behind her a fresh engagement for my ensuing season, untrammelled by the obstacles of 1847.

In the meanwhile, the romance of that first engagement with Drury Lane was gradually developed. Mr. Bunn brought his action against Mademoiselle Lind for breach of contract. The damages, originally rated by himself at the sum of £500, were now, in consideration of her great success, estimated at £10,000. The action came on for trial at Guildhall, in November, but was adjourned, in consequence of there being an insufficient number of special jurymen.

The first results of the establishment of the "Royal Italian Opera" at Covent Garden proved far from detrimental to my interest. It soon became notorious that, in a pecuniary point of view, the season had proved a failure to Signor Persiani and Mr. Beale—so much so,

indeed, that the health of the *prima donna* (wife of the former) became seriously affected through her anxiety and care. In one sense, the formation of the hostile camp had proved of considerable moral advantage to the director of the old establishment. The acrimony displayed by the supporters of the new opera, and the consequent party-spirit excited, had rallied all my friends, supporters, and patrons in firm phalanx around me. As well to mark the satisfaction of the old supporters of Her Majesty's Theatre with their season's entertainment, as to signify their appreciation of the director's past conduct in general, a magnificent testimonial was presented to me towards the close of the season of 1847. It was inscribed with these words: "In record of the zeal, judgment and liberality, evinced in the management of Her Majesty's Theatre, this testimonial is presented to B. Lumley, Esq., by his friends and subscribers." A comprehensive subscription list was appended to the gift, including the names of several foreign ambassadors to this Court (that of one of my staunchest friends, Baron de B——, at their head), followed by the signatures of the Dukes of Wellington, Bedford, Cleveland, Devonshire, Leinster, and Somerset; the Marquises of Lansdowne, Clanricarde, Donegal, Granby, and Huntley; the Earls of Lonsdale, Harrington, Kenmare, Bective, and Pembroke; with a host of others, titled and untitled, including that of the Prince Louis Napoleon. This handsome piece of plate was to me a great source of pride and solace amidst all my trials and anxieties, as it showed the esteem and favour with which I was regarded by opera-goers at this crisis of my fortunes. Letters poured in upon me on every side, and from the noblest in the land, in assurance of support. Even anonymous

good wishes were conveyed to me, to cheer and encourage me on my way.

The *fêtes champêtres*, given by me at my suburban residence (called "The Chancellors"), at Fulham, were always a leading feature of the summer season. They were thronged by persons of distinction of both sexes, as well as by "notabilities," dramatic, artistic, and literary, both foreign and English; the present Emperor of the French among the rest. Invitations to these gay "réunions" were eagerly sought, and it may be remarked with truth that my position, both professional and private, was altogether higher at this period than it had ever yet been.

Amongst the guests present at the fête of 1847 was the popular idol of the day, Jenny Lind, the object of curiosity and interest with all the gay throng assembled on that occasion. After an hour or so spent in the gardens, observing that she shrank from the universal gaze, I conducted her to an elegant pavilion on the margin of the river, where she was surrounded by a small and choice company. The star of Her Majesty's Theatre enjoyed the repast provided for her in quiet; whilst in an adjoining "salon," in the same pavilion, was entertained the Duchess of Bedford's party.

Before entirely closing the record of this important season of 1847, it would seem necessary to advert to one unfulfilled promise. Upon the prospectus anticipations were noted of a new ballet, to be constructed by the celebrated German poet and satirist, Heinrich Heine. For some time this project had been in contemplation; and, after a lengthy correspondence between the manager and author, the detailed programme of this ballet

(upon which Heine, in his curious letters, seems to have set great store, as a pet offspring of his fertile brain), was placed in my hands. The subject was that of "Faust,"—not the Faust of Goethe, but the original "Faust" of old German legendary lore, from which Goethe had indirectly derived the first idea of his great drama. Preparations were already in progress for the production of this work. Upon examination it was found, unfortunately, impracticable in respect of its "situations" and scenic effects for stage purposes. True, it was the work of a poet; but of a poet unacquainted with the necessities of stage representation, especially in England—of a man of powerful imagination, who presupposed that a public would see the effects as *he* saw them, and feel with *his* feelings. In short, the execution of the ballet was an impossibility. In spite of the expenses already lavished on this work of a poet by the manager, it was found necessary to lay the ballet aside.

The name of Heine is so celebrated in modern literature, that a few of the letters addressed to me on the subject of his "Faust" may here be fitly introduced. I translate them from the French, the language in which he habitually corresponded:—

PARIS, 27th February, 1847.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Herewith you have the MS., which I engaged to deliver to you at the end of this month. I assure you that I will never again make a promise of the sort. You have no notion of the harm I have done myself in endeavouring worthily to execute my task, in my present condition. Get the English translation as soon as possible, and read it at a calm, leisure moment. Such a reading will make you better understand the look of my ballet, in which, for example, the "Witch's Sabbat," is but meagrely sketched, whereas the description in my

letter is as complete as it is authentic. You will judge of this yourself if you make the Prince of Darkness dance with his mistress. In the course of my researches I have found some marvellous things relative to the fantastic dance, of which, if my life is spared, I shall write more on some future occasion.

The few notes which I have annexed to my long letter are extracts, which, if you think fit, you may suppress in the brochure, to which I intend to give the following title:

THE LEGEND OF DR. JOHN FAUST; A BALLET-PANTOMIME; Followed by an explanatory letter addressed to the Director of Her Majesty's Theatre, by HEINRICH HEINE.

If the matter in the notes does not please you, the publisher ought to say, *en parenthèse*, that it has been omitted. Please let me have a copy of the English translation of the book and the letter, that I may correct it before it goes to press. My *brochure* ought to be very interesting to those who only know the "Faust" of Goethe. I shall, therefore, at some future time, publish it in German, but in an amplified form, and accompanied by some learned illustrations, that I may not incur the censure of our erudite Fausto-logists. Keep the name of my ballet a secret till the last, and in case of necessity, call it "Astaroth." I have shown in my letter that this name, as well as *Mephistopheles*, belonged to the demon invoked by *Faust;* and hence in your announcements you may fairly make use of it as a provisional title. You will be pleased to see the pains I have taken to make people understand that you give the real Faust of the legend. Your devoted,

HEINRICH HEINE.

Paris, 7th April, 1847.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I do not doubt that you are up to your ears in business, and that all your thoughts are absorbed in your daily struggles. Nevertheless, I implore you to think of me for a couple of minutes, and to employ them—first, in sending me some money, next in giving me some notion of the time when my ballet will be produced. Above all, don't forget the money. I have relied upon you for this present month of April, and feel assured that England, immense as her expenses must be in these warlike times, is always sufficiently rich to subsidize her poorer allies, who are very brave,

and very beggarly—*(très gueux)*. At all events, write to me forthwith. My unfortunate industrial affairs have plunged me into a financial embarrassment, as harassing as that of H. M. the King of Prussia.

As I am of opinion that you will bring out my ballet in the course of the present month, I have just taken precautions to secure my copyright in France. I have had a few dozen copies secretly printed by a discreet printer; and by lodging them among the Archives of the Minister of the Interior, as prescribed by law, have protected myself against piracy. . . . . A thousand good wishes from your devoted, HEINRICH HEINE.

Paris, May 3rd, 1847.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have received yours of the 27th ult. No one can be more amiable than you. I thank you for the advance of the 6000 francs, for which I gave an acknowledgment to MM Lafitte and Co. The money, I must own, comes to me very *apropos;* and hence I thank you doubly. I shall be delighted to hear of the production of my ballet—its success appears to me indubitable. All that I have hitherto done has found favour with the public; and as for you, you have luck on your side, as I can perceive by the great triumphs, on which I congratulate you. You will find my ballet excite a *furore* beyond all our expectation, and even take a place in the annals of the drama. Indeed, your generosity would quite overwhelm me, did I for a moment entertain a doubt of a great success. With respect to the secret printing of the book, of which I have spoken, I should be vexed in the extreme if I thought that it interfered with your rights; but I do not fear anything of the kind. My secret is safe in the hands of a man who is naturally very discreet—namely, Buloz, the director of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, who keeps a press of his own, in the name of his chief clerk. The latter is named as my publisher, and all the copies are in my hands, with the exception of two, which I have lodged with the Minister of the Interior, and which are consequently buried in the Catacombs for printed paper in the Rue de Grenoble. Moreover, there is nothing in the title to indicate a ballet. All the copies, I repeat, are in my hands, and I shall send them to London by the Messagerie. This very day I send a copy with the letter, which I now write to you, in spite of the

dreadful state of my eyes. Buloz, too, has a personal interest in keeping my secret. I had informed him of my intention to print my libretto in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, together with the letter to Mr. Lumley, as soon as my ballet was produced in London; and it was he himself who advised me to sacrifice a few francs in printing it secretly and provisionally, in order that I might legally protect myself against the dramatic pirates, who would lay hold of my work if it appeared in the *Revue*, a periodical which is not protected as it ought to be by the law. You see, my dear friend, that, according to my belief, I have acted for the best. You will now tell me whether you object to the publication of my ballet in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, immediately after the first performance in London—for I do not wish to do anything without your authority. In any case, send me a paper that I shall only have to sign for the security of your copyright, so far as this is possible. I am not acquainted with the laws of England relative to interests of this kind; but it seems to me that all that would compromise you may be avoided by a very simple expedient. You have only to print some copies in English, and keep them under lock and key till the day of the first performance. At all events, you, who are dexterity personified, will be able to devise some means for your own protection. With the copies of the ballet, I shall send you a long fantastical poem, which I have inserted in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and which has had an enormous success. You will there find the description of the chase by night, and of the *Diane Chasseresse*, who appears as a phantom. By publishing my ballet here in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, I shew that I attach an artistic importance to it which is altogether exceptional; and the literary weight of the *Revue* will thus give us a lift. I do not think it would be unadvisable to print the German version of the book at the same time (with some notices of the preface) in the *Augsburg Gazette*. This would save you an advertisement. Consider me at your disposal in everything. By-the-bye, explain to your ballet-maistre what I have written in my letter on the subject of the "Witches' Sabbath," and ask him if it is not possible (after the exit of *Faust*) to make the Duchess dance a frightfully grotesque *pas de deux* with the infernal Goat. The Duchess would thus be the Domina of the *fête*, whom I have described in my letter, but I do not think one could venture to go so far in such a fashionable theatre as yours.

Yours devotedly, HEINRICH HEINE.

To show how long poor Heine continued sanguine on the subject of his impossible ballet, I take a great leap, and insert a letter written five years afterwards:—

Paris, 21st February, 1852.

MY DEAR MR. LUMLEY,—To make a clean breast of it, I feel compelled to tell you of an annoyance, which may have but little interest for you, but which I feel very acutely. I had had a translation made of my little book of "Faust," in order that it might form part of a larger work than any that I shall publish this year, and had sent this to the *Revue des deux Mondes* for preliminary use. About a fortnight ago, M. de Mars, the manager, called upon me, saying that he would publish this work, after making some improvements in point of style, and proposing that I should change and omit some portions. I gave him full authority to do as he pleased, with the sole reservation that he should not alter the title of the work, or cut out any part of the letter to you. Imagine my annoyance when, on the appearance of the last number, I at once perceived that my formal demand had not been complied with. I am on good terms with M. Buloz, the director of the *Revue des deux Mondes*, and have seen no reason to complain of him. Indeed, I have always found him more loyal than other directors of the French journals, who have very little respect for an author's dignity, and who, while they declaim grandiloquently about the liberty of the press, cut and hack one's thoughts, as caprice may suggest, veritable despots as they are. Hence I was the more astonished at what Buloz had done on this occasion. I shall complain bitterly, and have no doubt that he will acknowledge his fault, and particularly with respect to you, prove his regret on some future occasion. I am too ill at present to occupy myself with discussions of the sort, but to-day my friendship for you compels me to speak. I am aware that you will not be surprised to find ill-will in the Paris press, but still it is always as well to know in what shape it displays itself.

My ballet has been greatly extolled by those who have read the "Faust" manuscript, and everybody is surprised that you have delayed its representation till now. I should be delighted if the public voice caused you to return to your original intention, and if the reputation of the book convinced you that this most conscientious

work would succeed at Her Majesty's Theatre, if you but decided on its representation. Be assured, sir, that there are few persons so heartily devoted to you as your affectionate servant,

HEINRICH HEINE.

From these letters it will be perceived that Heine had an amount of heart larger than is commonly supposed. Before taking leave of him and his "Faust," I may observe that one of his ideas furnished M. Paul Taglioni with the subject of his "Satanella." It was Heine who was of opinion that the Tempter should appear not as a hideous man, but as a beautiful woman.

The season of 1847 had closed, and in the late autumn I departed for the Continent in search of fresh talent for the season ensuing. Taking Germany in my way, to meet my late triumphant *prima donna* at Berlin, I visited all the principal theatres of the north of Italy.

It was at Rovigo that I first saw, in Verdi's opera of "Attila," a *prima donna* whose name afterwards came to be intimately associated with Her Majesty's Theatre, and was at once charmed with the fresh and *résonnante* voice of Mademoiselle Sophie Cruvelli. Overtures were immediately made to her for an engagement for the ensuing season in London; whereat Sophie Cruvelli was "in ecstacies." Her family objected that it was "too early yet" for her to risk the ordeal of an English public; but the young and spirited *prima donna* herself listened with "charmed ears" to my proposals. In my own opinion of Sophie Cruvelli, I was fortified by that of Rubini, who congratulated me on my intention. "*Vi dico francamente*," he wrote, "*é con intima per-*

suazione, chè fareste un eccellente aquisto." "*Una bellissima voce,*" he wrote again, "*datele buoni modelli e un buon maestro.*" "She is young, and ought to have a glorious future before her!"

The opinion of Rubini was always entitled to respect. Never probably was there another singer who so absolutely commanded the admiration of his brother artists. I remember well that in the "good old times," when he was executing one of his fascinating arias, Lablache and others of "the corps" would linger at the wings, as though unwilling to lose one of his enchanting notes. Considering how unusual it is for one singer to take much interest in the performance of another, this fact is significant of Rubini's power of enchaining the ear of his listeners.

CHAPTER XVI.

Season of 1848—Sophie Cruvelli—Belletti—Cuzzani—The Ballet "Fiorita"—Verdi's "Attila"—Abbadia—Sophie Vera—Performance for the Benefit of Distressed Artisans—Labocetta—Reappearance of Jenny Lind—The Farewell Night—Tadolini—"Les Quatre Saisons"—Decline of the Ballet—Jenny Lind's determination to quit the Stage.

Nowise disheartened by the prospect of a renewed struggle with the "Royal Italian Opera," I made my preparations for the opening of the season of 1848 under hopeful auspices, and with a far more reasonable promise of success than at the commencement of 1847.

The engagement of Jenny Lind for the season has been already mentioned. This was a tower of strength to the management, since her triumph of the previous year seemed to afford a warrant of her success in the future. The fever of excitement created by the "Swedish Nightingale" had by no means subsided during the recess, and would, in all likelihood, be again revived upon the first occasion. Novel attractions, upon which the highest expectations might legitimately be founded, had also been provided. On the other hand, it was rumoured that, in a financial point of view, the rival enterprise at Covent Garden had been anything but successful. With these considerations the management of Her Majesty's Theatre looked forward with hope and confidence to the future which lay before it.

Whatever fresh attraction might be in store, however,

it was indubitable that Mademoiselle Lind must be regarded as the main source of popularity for the theatre, and of advantage to the management. It was obviously my policy to produce my favourite *prima donna* as early in the season as possible. But against this hope difficulties and hindrances again arose. "The course of" opera management, it would seem, "never doth run smooth." Mademoiselle Lind was in her native country, at Stockholm; and when I urged her return as speedily as possible, I was met by assurances that it was impossible for her to start for England so soon as I desired. "The winter was long and tedious in the north. The Baltic was still encumbered with ice. It would be many weeks before the Baltic steamers could again perform their customary voyages; and even when the ice broke up it might be long before the passage could be made without considerable risk and peril."

The young singer, in all her letters, whilst expressing the strongest desire to revisit "ce cher Londres," was evidently appalled at the idea of encountering difficulties (easily magnified into dangers), and of adventuring upon hardships and inclemencies inseparable from a journey from the "Far North." "Le plutôt possible," was the only vague promise to be extracted from her; "à cette époque c'est beaucoup risquer," was the burden of all her hesitations. "Even if I seek to make the journey by Copenhagen," she wrote again, "les chemins sont terribles." Besides, the French revolution of 1848 had broken out. Germany was in a state of ferment; and what might not happen if she attempted to traverse the north of Europe? The state of politics, as well as the state of climate, militated thus against my eager wishes, so that I was forced to bide my time for

the advent of my principal star with what patience I could muster under the circumstances.

It was, moreover, evident, from Mademoiselle Lind's earlier letters at this period, that her mind was still somewhat disturbed by the thought of Mr. Bunn's impending suit. "Ce malheureux procès!" she wrote, "ne va-t-il jamais être decidé!"

The action of "Bunn *v.* Lind" *was* decided, however, long before the arrival of the trembling *prima donna*. Shortly after the opening of Her Majesty's Theatre for the season of 1848, the cause was tried "before Lord Denman and a Special Jury" in the Court of Queen's Bench, at the Guildhall. The proceedings excited great interest at the time. The Attorney-General appeared for Mademoiselle Lind; Mr. Bunn was represented by the present distinguished Chief Justice, then Mr. Cockburn; and the court was crowded to excess.

Eminent as were the pleaders in justification of the lady's breach of contract, the jury, probably taking the tender for their guide, gave a verdict in favour of the plaintiff, with £2500 damages.

Let it not be forgotten, that there had been a time when the hasty contract might have been cancelled for £500, had not Mademoiselle Lind superseded the negociation to that effect by an untenable proposal of her own. The subsequent success of the *prima donna* had warmed up Mr. Bunn into a demand for £10,000; but a British jury assessed his damages at a lower figure. And thus substantially ended the tedious romance which had wound its harassing course through so many incidents, accidents, and *péripéties*, but of which I was, finally, the only real victim.

It may be recorded here, before I drop the subject of

the disastrous contract with Mr. Bunn, that Mademoiselle Lind, on her arrival, made overtures of some species of compensation for the losses I had incurred on her account; but though the proposal was fully appreciated, the offer was not accepted.

The promise held forth for the approaching season at Her Majesty's Theatre was not only great, but brilliant. At the head of the programme stood, of course, the name of Jenny Lind; sufficient in itself to warrant a hopeful view. But not content with the certain attraction of the "Swedish Nightingale," I added that of Madame Tadolini, a *prima donna* of great name and fame both in Italy and Germany. Mademoiselle Sophie Cruvelli, a new star who now first rose upon the horizon of Her Majesty's Theatre, was comparatively unknown. But in the previous autumn, as I have already narrated, I had been struck with the splendid voice, the impulsive dramatic temperament, the spirit, and the captivating person of this young *soprano*, then singing at Rovigo. She had since found opportunities of widely increasing her fame by her performances at the "Fenice," at Venice, so that her growing reputation fully justified the curiosity evinced by the *dilettanti* of the day in regard to the *début* of Mademoiselle Sophie. Mademoiselle Abbadia was likewise to make her venture on the Anglo-Italian stage, heralded by no inconsiderable Italian repute. Mademoiselle Sophie Vera, a young singer, said to be of considerable merit, and Mademoiselle Schwartz, a contralto, from Vienna, were announced; and Mademoiselle Moltini was likewise to return. There was at once strength and interest and novelty in this long bill of fare. Gardoni, who had esta-

blished so many claims to sympathy and popularity in the previous season, headed the list of tenors. In the place of Fraschini appeared two fresh names—that of Signor Cuzzàni, from "la Scala," where he had been a popular favourite with the Milanese, and that of Signor Labocetta, who brought with him, as titles to a position on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre, warm and urgent recommendations from the Earl of Westmoreland (himself a distinguished musician as well as connoisseur), and from the Countess Rossi, formerly so great a favourite in London as Mademoiselle Sontag. Lablache, Coletti, and Bouché, with Federico Lablache, were to maintain their well-established position as representatives of the bass and baritone scales. Along with them appeared, for the first time, the name of a new and unknown artist, who was destined to establish himself permanently in English favour. Signor Beletti was coming, with credentials of which he had every reason to be proud, for they represented the high professional esteem and good will of no less a person than Jenny Lind. He had been her *camarade* on the boards of the Stockholm Theatre; and in her letters to me, the young *prima donna* spoke favourably of her brother artist, and evinced a sincere solicitude for his engagement. Her opinion was subsequently confirmed by general assent.

The provision in store for the season of 1848 was, it will be seen by this enumeration of the artists engaged, ample and complete, and as a last feature Balfe was to preside as before over the orchestra.

No less remarkable were the announcements respecting the ballet department. In addition to the long-established and popular names of Carlotti Grisi and Cerito appeared, first, that of Rosati, whose style of dancing had

been much admired during the previous season; and secondly, that of the sprightly and graceful young Marie Taglioni, who had won much favour at Her Majesty's Theatre in 1847 and was to return to it after a successful winter's performance at Berlin. These were supported by the usual brilliant host of minor *danseuses*. The names of Perrot and Paul Taglioni again appeared as rival *maitres de ballet*, with the accomplished St. Léon, the quaintly-named "Louis d'Or," and other *mimes* and dancers. There was no diminution, then, in the forces of the great choreographic army of Her Majesty's Theatre; and, consequently, every reason to suppose that the ballet would maintain its wonted *prestige*.

"Eager for the fray," I was in the field early, even more early than usual; taking up my position before the forces of the rival establishment were mustered. The theatre opened on Saturday, the 19th February, with Verdi's opera of "Ernani," which had been selected as a favourable framework for the *débuts* of no less than three new artists—viz., Mademoiselle Cruvelli as *Elvira*, Signor Cuzzani as *Ernani*, Signor Beletti as *Silva*.

Although Sophie Cruvelli, at this stage of her career, may not have been a faultless vocalist—(and it has been already seen how Rubini had declared, "Give her good models to study, and a good master, and she *will* be great")—she came, nevertheless, before the London audience with so many natural advantages that she was at once acknowledged as certain to become a general favourite. Indeed, it may be fairly assumed that, had not Jenny Lind so completely absorbed the public mind and thus rendered any rivalry in public estimation almost impossible, Sophie Cruvelli would have exercised even greater sway over the operatic world of London. She was endowed

with rare and precious gifts—a magnificent organ, sufficient artistic capacity, and a highly attractive person. She possessed, too, a certain quality which might become a treasure or a bane, according to the way in which she applied it. This was an impulsive, ardent, almost reckless genius—a quality capable of achieving great results, but requiring to be reined in by judgment, taste, and tact, so as not to overspring the boundaries of legitimate art, or (in common parlance) to "run wild." Had she the tact, the taste, the judgment? Upon these depended her future greatness. There is no doubt, however, that in spite of the sudden and awful nervousness which fell upon her when for the first time she faced the densely-crowded audience of Her Majesty's Theatre, the aspect of which somewhat paralysed her efforts in her *aria d'entrata*, Sophie Cruvelli did achieve a signal success on the occasion of her *début*. When once the undeniable spirit within was aroused, she carried all before her by its power. She was young, handsome, impulsive, clever; and with these advantages, she could hardly fail to be irresistible.

By the side of this strangely-gifted child of genius, another *débutante* already mentioned obtained a success equally certain, perhaps even more solid. Steady and sound as a musician, Beletti seemed to place his feet upon the boards of the opera-house with a consciousness that it was firm ground. He had a sonorous and flexible voice, sang in a careful, correct style, with a voluble delivery, but was endowed with little power as an actor. Beletti took up his position from the very first evening of his appearance—a position incontestable and uncontested. This was a pleasing circumstance for *her* who had in some measure staked her own reputation

for judgment on the success of her estimable comrade.

Cuzzani, the favourite of the Berliners, was less happy in his *début.* He was pronounced to be "pleasant," "nice," or any other epithet that did not go beyond a certain *succès d'estime.* He appeared under the disadvantage of an influenza; but the judgment of the public was never wholly reversed, either on subsequent evenings or in other operas.

So great had been the popularity of Gardoni during the previous season, that to produce their pet sympathetic tenor before the *habitués* of Her Majesty's Theatre, was ever to "play a trump card." On this account the young singer was "cast" for the character of the king in "Ernani;" the part in the original score being written for a baritone.* Some of the music was consequently transposed for Gardoni. But the commanding power of voice required to enable him to predominate in the great finale of the third act, was wanting; and accordingly the reputation of the favourite tenor nowise gained by this venture. Still, by dint of all the varied interest due to the novelty of the "cast," "Ernani" worked its way, and gave a very important *prestige* to the opening of Her Majesty's Theatre for the season of 1848.

A very poetical fairy ballet, composed by Paul Taglioni, and entitled "Fiorita," introduced the two *débutantes* of the previous season, who had already received marks of public favour—viz., Rosati and Marie Taglioni. With exquisitely pretty scenery, and lavishly-beautiful decoration in every respect, this new choreographic work was

* The part had been given in the previous year, at Covent Garden, to Mademoiselle Alboni, a contralto, then in the height of her popularity. But the result had been altogether unsatisfactory.

pronounced another "success"—the two dancers emulating each other under the excitement produced.

I had thus a fair start, and might perhaps keep the victory in the race about to be run. "Ernani" was followed up by "Il Barbière," for Cruvelli, Gardoni, and Beletti, (this last as *Figaro*); Federico Lablache sustaining his father's part of *Bartolo*, not without merit; and again the young singers pleased all save the hyper-critical. But the chief attraction of the ante-Easter season was reserved for the "Attila" of Verdi, the opera in which I had first heard and been charmed with the rich voice and dramatic qualities of Sophie Cruvelli, at Padua. This was, in fact, the opera in which she first appeared upon any stage.

None, perhaps, of Verdi's works had kindled more enthusiasm in Italy, or crowned the fortunate composer with more abundant laurels than his "Attila." Its fame was great in the native land of the composer. In catering for novelty, therefore, the Director of Her Majesty's Theatre must be held to have done well in producing a work of so great repute, and in placing before his subscribers *the* leading opera of the day upon the Italian stage. To prove with what good will this was done, the opera had been "mounted" with great scenic splendour, and with every "appliance" likely to produce effect.

"Attila" was produced on Tuesday, the 14th of March. Cruvelli sang "con fuoco." Her fine fresh ringing voice "told." Beletti displayed unusual histrionic talent, besides all that steadiness and excellence of "school," which helped to earn him his reputation in this country. Gardoni was in the "cast," whilst Cuzzani accepted a second tenor part. On every side were zeal, talent, and good-will employed successfully to execute a

work which many cities of Italy had pronounced to be Verdi's masterpiece. But although Verdi had already commenced to make his way to English favour—and this by means of that vigour and dramatic fire which unquestionably belonged to him—the public displayed an unwonted unanimity of sulkiness upon the production of "Attila." They would have "none of it." Consequently "Attila" proved a failure. Music and *libretto* displeased alike.

Notwithstanding the ill-favour with which this work was received, it was found unavoidable to fall back once more upon Verdi, and "I Due Foscari" and "Nino" were both revived. The former was given for the first appearance (that season) of Coletti, now become a popular singer, and great in the character of the unhappy *Doge*. The latter was revived for the joint *débuts* of Mesdemoiselles Abbadia and Sophie Vera. The fate of these *débutantes* was different. Mademoiselle Abbadia utterly failed to win the favour of her new audience; whilst Mademoiselle Vera was kindly received.

The pre-paschal season thus sped on, with Cruvelli, Gardoni, Coletti, and Beletti as its chief attractions—not without some drawbacks, however, since the illness of Cruvelli caused the postponement of "Lucrezia Borgia," in which Mademoiselle Schwartz, the new contralto, was to have appeared. The great Lablache, on this occasion, came opportunely to the rescue, making his first appearance for the season in a portion of "Il Matrimonio Segreto." "Lucrezia" at last enabled Mademoiselle Cruvelli to increase her reputation as a dramatic vocalist, and gave Gardoni another hold upon his already sympathetic audience in the part of *Gennaro*. The "cast," moreover, was in other respects most in-

teresting. Not only did Mademoiselle Schwartz make a favourable *début* as *Maffeo Orsini* (a hard task, considering the immense popularity of Mademoiselle Alboni at the rival house), but Lablache resumed on the occasion his character of *Alfonso*, in which, though it was one of his greatest parts, he had of late rarely appeared.

These performances had been diversified by a grand extra night for the benefit of the "distressed artisans," for which I granted the use of my theatre, when I was honoured by the presence of the Queen, the Court, and (in familiar phrase) "all London;" and again, by two miscellaneous concerts. At one of these the "Stabat Mater" was presented to its hosts of admirers, and M. Thalberg, the illustrious pianist, played.

Thus far the season had advanced, when suddenly the rumour spread, "Jenny Lind is come!" Jenny Lind *was* come. She had left Stockholm on the 13th of April, escorted from the shore to the steam-ship by some ten thousand of her countrymen; she had departed from her native land amidst music and cheers, and wavings of hats and handkerchiefs continued so long as the vessel that bore away the cherished songstress remained in sight.

All London soon knew that Jenny Lind was come, and "all London" again took up its excitement at same point of "fever-heat" whereat it had stood at her departure in the previous year.

Yes! Jenny Lind was amongst us, and the most eager expectations were raised as to her first appearance. When?—How?—What would she play?—were the questions impatiently asked. She had arrived in London on Good Friday, the 21st of April, and required some repose after her long journey. It was earnestly desired

that she would appear on Saturday, the 29th. But with the natural tendency of the Scandinavian temperament to believe in occult influences, Mademoiselle Lind laid great stress on the fact that the 4th of May (the ensuing Thursday) was the date of her first appearance on the London boards, and she therefore decided that on the 4th of May, and not before the 4th of May, she would celebrate her return to the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre.

In the meanwhile, the period of the recess having passed over, it was necessary, for reopening the theatre, to fall back upon the resources of the ante-Easter season. "Lucrezia Borgia" (postponed again on account of the illness of Gardoni), "I Due Foscari," and Cerito and St. Léon, who reappeared in their favourite *divertissement* of "La Vivandière," were the chief attractions. On Saturday, the 29th of April (*the* Saturday on which the public had hoped to have welcomed back Jenny Lind), Signor Labocetta, the tenor from the Italian Opera at Berlin, made his *début* in "Il Barbière." He was considered deficient in the qualities needed to sustain a permanent position in a theatre of such magnitude and such pretensions, and the court favourite of Berlin received nothing more than "faint praise" and "cold esteem."

And now Thursday, the 4th of May, drew nigh. The privileged of the theatre told tales abroad of the appearance of the "Swedish Nightingale" at rehearsal, of her enthusiastic reception by all the members of the orchestra, of her overpowering emotion on facing this tumultuously flattering welcome, and of her undiminished, nay, increased powers. Thursday, the 4th of May came. The scenes of excitement in all the thoroughfares lead-

ing to the theatre were once more renewed; again were struggling crowds early at the doors; again were hats doubled up, and dresses torn; and again was the throng of carriages, the clamour and conflict of coachmen, servants, policemen, mob, the same as of yore. A "Jenny Lind crush" had lost nothing of its fever and intensity. The adored *prima donna* was to make her reappearance in the part which, more than all, had fascinated her enraptured admirers of the previous year, namely, the part of *Amina* in "La Sonnambula."

Words fail to describe the aspect of the overcrowded house, the tumultuous reception, the enthusiasm which knew no bounds and no limits of time, or to give an idea of the prolonged cheering that followed every vocal display on the part of this idol of the public. The house was crowded to a state of impossibility, which eagerness and determination had exercised their magic to make possible. The Court was present; and an incident, independent of the great event of the evening, is worthy of record. It was the first appearance of the Queen in public, since the famous 10th of April, when English loyalty and English "pluck" had pretty clearly shown that England could have nothing to fear from the revolutionary elements which were just then rife in Europe, driving monarchs from their thrones. When the British Sovereign first reappeared among her subjects, loyalty was not to be baulked of a fitting demonstration; and in spite of the etiquette of the day, which allowed the Queen, as well as her subjects, to enjoy a dramatic entertainment without interruption, she was received by such universal homage of acclamation, that she was constrained to appear in the front of her box to acknowledge the demonstration, whilst the

National Anthem was sung by the chief singers of the establishment.* Well might the newspapers of the day preface their record by the phrase, "The *great* evening of the season has come off, and the result has been most brilliant."

It would be superfluous to record each night of undiminished "sensation," and every evidence of an enthusiasm amounting almost to frenzy, and not unaptly termed "the Jenny Lind mania" (although without a trace of the falseness or delusion usually applied to the expression "mania,") as it would be a task of singular monotony to attempt to depict every "Jenny Lind crush." The great singer's nightly reception, by equally crowded houses, and the same deafening acclamations, must be simply indicated by the musical phrase, *da capo* —and again *da capo*—and once more *da capo*, up to the

* On the occasion of the memorable 10th of April, when the liveliest fears were abroad respecting the mischievous purposes of the mob, extraordinary preparations had been made to defend Her Majesty's Theatre from any projected attack. The windows and doors were to be barricaded, so as to leave the whole force of the defence concentrated on one or two points. The *employés* of the theatre were to be divided into two sections, each with a lieutenant under the orders of a commander. Sentinels were to be posted to watch the main entrance. Should the stage door to the street be forced, the two divisions were to fall back, in different directions, each making good its own ground at the various points indicated, "where a good defence might be made by a few determined men." With pistols, and a few "small arms," it was considered that they "could hold the passages a long time." "Should the mob eventually overpower all resistance, the defenders might then make good their retreat across the stage, or to the Arcade, or over the roof of the concert room," says the report. The whole document is a curious illustration of the popular feeling on that extraordinary day.

last night of the season. A review of Jenny Lind's fresh performances can alone be attempted, the vivid colouring of the outlines being left to the imagination of the reader.

After repeating the "Sonnambula" and "La Figlia del Reggimento" to overcrowded houses, Mademoiselle Lind appeared (for the first time in England), on Thursday, May 25th, as "Lucia di Lammermoor." Again, both as singer and actress, her triumph was complete. No praise was considered too high, no amount of applause sufficient even, to mark the sense of popular opinion and the admiration of the throng, who struggled and sweltered to witness her performance in this part.

On Thursday, the 8th of June, she appeared in a second new part, the *Adina* of the "Elisir." Again the same triumph—the same enthusiasm! That inexpressible charm which pervaded almost all the impersonations of the gifted songstress, gave a new stamp to the character of the village coquette. Of the singing of the part it would be needless to speak further. "Such an *Adina* we have never beheld," was the judgment of the day—Gardoni, Beletti, and Lablache, all heard and seen to signal advantage, gave the crowning colour of excellence to the rendering of Donizetti's charming *opera buffa*. The Swedish *prima donna* won again, in the "Puritani," one of those triumphs which now seemed to attend her in all that she brought before her audience. Words seemed insufficient to express the admiration of her adorers in all classes. Few were those who criticised or even analysed the general judgment.

With these three parts terminated the series of fresh impersonations of Jenny Lind. Since the vast space of Her Majesty's Theatre was filled to suffocation on every

night when the "Swedish Nightingale" appeared, whatever the opera—whatever the character she sang—there was little need to encumber her with study by the production of fresh operatic works.

Two of the most successful pieces of last season had meanwhile been given. Jenny Lind appeared in the part which had first "taken the town by storm,"—in the part of *Alice*, in "Roberto Il Diavolo." But, although the public seemed to care for nothing but Jenny Lind, and although all the interest of the opera centred in the great favourite of the day, that same public appeared to resent the mutilation of Meyerbeer's great work, 1st, by the entire suppression of the character of the *Princess Isabella*, and 2nd, by the omission of two complete acts. The revival was thus a failure in popular esteem, though not in remunerative attraction; for, as has been said, whenever, and *whatever* "Jenny" sang, the house was crowded to its farthest limits. The "cast," it must be said, lacked the completeness of the previous year. Gardoni (the *Raimbaldo* of the previous season), favourite though he was, was pronounced not up to the part of *Roberto;* whilst Beletti, although usually applauded by the audience in other characters was judged deficient in the depth and intensity necessary to *Bertram.* Labocetta, the new *Raimbaldo*, also failed to please. The experiment of the revival of "Roberto il Diavolo," under these conditions, was, therefore, anything but prosperous.

Far more satisfactory was that of "Le Nozze di Figaro," with Jenny Lind as *Susanna*, Cruvelli as the *Countess*, and the whole bass force of the establishment (unusually strong for any one operatic *troupe*), comprising Lablache, Coletti, Beletti, and Bouché. Had

not Mademoiselle Schwartz, the contralto of the season, been unfortunately suffering both from mental affliction, and severe indisposition, and thus unable to do full justice to the *Cherubino*, this performance of Mozart's great opera might have been looked upon as one of the most complete ever witnessed.

And now the career of the distinguished artist approached to its close for the season of 1848. On Thursday, August the 24th, Mademoiselle Lind sang "La Sonnambula" for the last time. Her welcome of the 4th of May previous could scarcely have been surpassed in the amount of rapture and enthusiasm to which a great theatre could give vent; but yet it *was* almost "o'ertopped" by the tumult of applause, the waving of hats and handkerchiefs, and the long protracted lingering, and still lingering cheer which bade farewell to the great singer on this night. The curtain at last fell on Jenny Lind, and in falling, closed a season of unexampled interest.

My record of the season has been occupied, since the *début* of this gifted songstress, with *her* performances only. But there had been materials of interest, and indeed causes of excitement, scattered among the operatic doings of the year, apart from Jenny Lind. These events claim their special notice in a history of my management.

On Saturday, May the 20th, Madame Tadolini, the favourite heroine of Donizetti, whose great reputation in all the chief theatres of Italy, as well as at Vienna, had rendered her *début* a matter of much surmise and curiosity, made her first appearance in "Linda di Chamouni." That this *début* was successful could not

be gainsaid. With a fine person, a voice of excellent natural quality, considerable brilliancy of execution (slightly defective perhaps in finish), and energetic powers as an actress, the new *prima donna* displayed much to justify the warmth of her welcome, and the amount of encouraging applause which followed upon it. Still, the impression made by this great favourite of so many continental audiences was neither strong nor permanent; so hard was it to struggle with advantage against the absorbing *prestige* which surrounded Jenny Lind.

Scarcely less noteworthy was the first appearance of the well-known English tenor, Mr. Sims Reeves, in the part of *Carlo*, on the same occasion. It was in those days a rare event for an English singer to venture upon the boards of the Anglo-Italian stage; and the force of fashion and prejudice made the venture one of unusual difficulty. But with his advantages of Italian training and style, Mr. Sims Reeves was entitled to be fairly considered as an Italian singer. He had not only a beautiful natural organ, but expression and passion were at his command, and there can be little doubt that he might have permanently justified the enthusiastic welcome of what might be termed the "national" portion of the audience of Her Majesty's Theatre, and might have battled successfully against prejudice, had not difficulties, created by himself, arisen, and caused his secession for the remainder of the season. On the repetition of the opera of "Linda," on the Monday following, a public notice appeared, placarded in all parts of the house, stating that at a late hour Mr. Sims Reeves had refused to sing the part of *Carlo*, and that Signor Gardoni had undertaken, "at a very brief notice," to supply his place. The change was not

greatly to be regretted, for the popularity of Gardoni aided him, and he sang his best. On the morrow, there appeared in all the principal daily prints a long letter from Mr. Sims Reeves, protesting against the interpretation given to his refusal, and asserting that he had only accepted an engagement at Her Majesty's Theatre on the express stipulation that he should be cast for the part of *Edgardo* in the "Lucia," and other principal tenor parts; and that finding he was not to sing in a forthcoming representation of the first named opera, he considered his contract annulled, and himself at liberty to withdraw. To this communication a firm denial was given in another letter from Mr. Balfe, the conductor, in which that gentleman affirmed that no such stipulation had ever been made—an affirmation he was able to maintain, inasmuch as he himself had signed the contract made with Mr. Reeves; and that moreover the coveted part could not have been promised to him, it having been in the possession of Signor Gardoni six weeks before the engagement of the English vocalist. To this powerful counter-statement no answer was forthcoming, and here the matter would probably have dropped, had not some injudicious friends of the English tenor endeavoured to create a popular demonstration in the shape of a cry for "Sims Reeves" on the appearance of Gardoni as *Edgardo* a few nights afterwards. This so-called demonstration, however, was quickly subdued by the help of the audience, and finally died out, simply from want of supporters.

The second appearance of Madame Tadolini was as *Norina*, in "Don Pasquale." Brilliant without finish, and perhaps also without elegance, the celebrated *prima donna* nevertheless elicited in this her only part after

the "Linda," a great amount of applause, and may again be said to have achieved a success. Brilliancy and vivacity are "telling" qualities with a miscellaneous audience. But the opportunities afforded this clever singer were few. One star shone with too powerful a light in the operatic sphere to allow any other star, however radiant, to sparkle with in its legitimate lustre. It was difficult, indeed almost impossible, both for Cruvelli and Tadolini to shed their really bright rays, whilst the great planet Jenny Lind was in the ascendant. Of the two ladies, Cruvelli had the better chance of winning fame in England, since she had commenced her career earlier in the year, before the arrival of the all-absorbing "Jenny." She accordingly maintained her footing; whilst the sister "star," Tadolini, set below the horizon of the Italian stage at the end of the season, once and for ever.

A similar lot attended in some degree all the efforts of the great dancers during the "Lind" season. The ballet, indeed, still boasted its admirers—in some instances its *exclusive* admirers—and a certain degree of interest and excitement could be ensured by any novel experiment in the choreographic department. But when all tongues were exclusively occupied by one name, how could they find accents to talk of other operatic topics, as in the olden time? Carlotta Grisi and the inventive Perrot, Cerito, and St. Léon, with Rosati and Marie Taglioni, formed an *ensemble* as great and effective as any known in the "palmy days" of the ballet. They danced in ballets old and new—in "La Vivandière," "Alma," "Les Elements," and in the once famous "Pas des Déesses," in "Les Quatre Saisons," also in a new *ballet divertissement*, one of the charming conceptions

of Perrot, so fertile in invention and so skilful in execution. In this *pas* the four great *danseuses* were combined in that exquisite rivalry which had created so great an excitement in "all London" in previous years. The same amount of enthusiasm, and even of extravagant applause, was awarded, in all appearance, to this new combination as had been shewn on previous displays of the united forces. Admiration was lavished, bouquets were flung in showers, gloves torn, and *danseuses* recalled as of yore. But the ballet was no longer the "town talk." The ungrateful town could find tongue but for one object—Jenny Lind—Jenny Lind, to whom the nobility, and gentry, and even the clergy of England offered their respectful homage, and opened their country houses; Jenny Lind, the practical and living heroine of domestic drama, the prolific dispenser of world-wide charities, of whose private life every detail was caught up and diffused far and wide, with as much interest and eagerness as was every "trait" connected with her brilliant public career.

Under these circumstances, the season of 1848 came to its close, having proved, in a financial point of view, far more remunerative than the preceding one, in which so much had been absorbed by the extra expenses entailed by Jenny's vacillations. "Le Roi est mort," says old French ceremonial custom, "Vive le Roi!" The season of 1848 was no sooner departed, than anxious thoughts and cares arose for the season of 1849. Every necessary preparation, however, was hampered by harassing doubts and fears. Jenny Lind, now the one great object of attraction, had not signed an engagement for the coming year—still hesitated to sign—would not say "yes" or "no." Till the *fiat*, for good or other-

wise could be obtained, all expectation was vague and disquieting, and, what was worst of all, every speculation was necessarily in abeyance.

During the period of these hopes and fears, Mademoiselle Lind, in accordance with a portion of her engagement made for the year 1848, was absent in the provinces and in Ireland, upon a *tournée* (as such a journey was termed in artist language), with a select company, of which Roger, the celebrated French tenor, Beletti, and Federico Lablache, were the principal members. In Birmingham, Cheltenham, Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Glasgow, York, Dublin, Bristol, Worcester, Gloucester, and other places, Jenny Lind appeared—now at the theatres in some of her more admired characters; now in the concert-room, as circumstances or policy dictated. These appearances were accompanied by demonstrations, in which the provinces seemed resolved to outdo the metropolis in frantic enthusiasm. Mademoiselle Lind's *tournée* yielded me a certain profit, but not so considerable as might have been expected, owing to the vast amount of expenses—a sum of £10,000 falling to the share of the *prima donna* herself. Her excursion, prolonged into the latter months of the year, wore the appearance of a queenly "progress." Details of all her performances, or numerous "traits," and anecdotes of the "Swedish Nightingale" filled the provincial papers, and were re-echoed in the London prints.

Little by little, during the winter, rumours had crept abroad, and had even found a place in the public papers, that Jenny Lind had fallen under the influences of an adviser highly placed in the hierarchy of the church, who had used all his powers of eloquence to persuade the singer that out of respect to herself and to religion,

she was bound to quit the stage. Many of the better-judging would not credit the report that a bishop, whilst enjoying a reputation for liberality and tolerance, had endeavoured to detach the artist from the stage, instead of encouraging her to remain in a sphere wherein her bright example might continue to exert a purifying influence. Nevertheless, the belief gained ground that, from whatever source they proceeded, powerful influences were at work upon the mind of the young lady to induce her to abandon the stage for ever, as a profession incompatible with true religious feeling, and even with moral propriety.

Whatever exaggeration there may possibly have been in these rumours, it is more than probable that some foundation for them did really exist. Vaccillating as the young singer was known to be, there must have been a painful struggle in her mind relative to the advice offered her to abandon her profession.* At one time she resolved to submit to this influence, at another she seemed unhappy at the thought of extinguishing what had been the hope and aim of her girlhood, the ambition and pride of her womanhood. Thus all was indecision—all perplexity. One day the wavering lady

* This "advice," I have since learned from undoubted authority, was not proffered to Mademoiselle Lind in reference to any dislike of her profession. The estimable prelate here alluded to was induced to believe that Jenny Lind, though desiring earnestly to quit the stage, felt compelled to remain from a sense of obligation towards her director, whom she had, perhaps unadvisedly, encouraged to expect that she would stand by him for another season. The kind counsels of the bishop and his respected family went solely to the point of sustaining the young singer's own decision, supposing it to be truly taken by her, against the importunity of her theatrical friends and "confrères."

declared she would abide by the counsel of a valued friend, who advised her on no account to relinquish her career; and on the next she would recall her promise, and let it be announced that she "could not come."

Friends of long date and long acquired sympathies urged her not to give way to counsels founded on mistaken views of her interests, or to take a step which she would eventually regret. Affectionate solicitude endeavoured to steady a mind, evidently harassed and torn by remonstrances of varied character. Her state of indecision was as injurious to her own peace, as it was perplexing and distressing to the manager. And in this condition of affairs the season of 1849 drew near.

CHAPTER XVII.

Approach of the Season of 1849—Uncertainty respecting the Engagement of Jenny Lind—Rumours about the influence exercised on her by persons of social eminence—The real facts of the case—The Journey to Paris—The meeting with Catalani—Digression—Notes on Rossini.

THE year 1849 had commenced—the opening of the season drew nearer and nearer—and still the hopes, fears, and anxious doubts relative to the re-engagement of Mademoiselle Jenny Lind were not fully and entirely set at rest. Kept in a state of harassing suspense as to the reappearance on the stage of her who had proved in latter years my chief attraction, I was naturally unable to form any definite plans or to conclude any decided arrangements. More than ever I felt the force of the wearied exclamation of the celebrated Marshal Saxe, "I would rather command an army of 100,000 men, than attempt to direct an opera *corps*;" and with still greater earnestness might he have said it, had his most reliable "Lieutenant" refused to declare whether he would fight or no.

The public prints, which had hitherto made regretful and painful allusions to the supposed religious influences in high quarters brought to bear upon the susceptible temperament of the Swedish singer, in order to induce

her to relinquish the stage as a profession, now (about the month of February) began to teem with hints respecting influences of a more direct nature exercised upon the young lady to the same intent. Soon it was positively asserted by these indiscreet chroniclers, that she was engaged, and would shortly be married to a young gentleman of good family, related to an eminent banker. Little by little the rumour spread that it was the intended bridegroom whose religious scruples had induced the *prima donna* to express her desire of leaving the stage for ever. Some of the principal organs of the press evinced much indignation at the slur thrown upon a whole profession; some loudly remonstrated with the wavering singer; some with gentle words urged the fallacy of her quitting a profession of which she had been "the pride and ornament," and which "could neither contaminate her or degrade her either morally or socially." That her mind was in a state of harassing perplexity there can be no doubt. At last it was publicly announced that the "Swedish Nightingale" would again sing in public, but in concerts only, and that those concerts were to be held in Exeter Hall. Exeter Hall! Was I, then, to be entirely thrown over?

In this state of affairs, subscribers, who had looked for Jenny Lind as the main attraction of the forthcoming season, naturally held back. Even the Court remained undecided. No box was to be taken for Her Majesty, the Queen, until it was known whether the favourite *prima donna* was, or was not, to appear upon the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre; or, at all events, until a definitive programme could be issued. Now, it was impossible for a director, while all was yet in abey-

ance, to put forward to the public an official prospectus of the season, by which the future fortunes of the theatre were to stand or fall. I could do no more than send out a written circular to the Court, the principal subscribers, and the press, detailing what my arrangements might probably or possibly be. Many of the principal frequenters of the theatre held on by the manager "through thick and thin." Many more looked on and waited, and asked—"Is Jenny Lind to act?"

The real condition of affairs will be understood more truly after the perusal of what follows. The leading facts have been furnished by a friendly pen:—

The public feeling, as has been said, exhibited itself in various forms of disappointment and discontent when it was reported that Mademoiselle Lind would probably soon withdraw from the opera stage. It was affirmed that a late respected prelate had used his influence with the young *prima donna* to induce her to retire from the theatrical world, and had urged it on the ground of religious motives. These rumours spread through all ranks, and were echoed from the most distant corners of the kingdom; nevertheless, the causes were altogether independent of this supposed pressure on the part of her respected friends.

It was about the latter part of the year 1848, that a young gentleman, of creditable birth and position, and of good connections, became honoured with Mademoiselle Lind's preference over all other aspirants (and these were numerous) to her favour. An engagement, not for a "season," but for life, was in due course contracted between the parties, and down to the spring of 1849 there was every reason to suppose that the fair Swede would become "one of us," by her marriage with an Englishman.

But it came to pass that, pending the arrangements necessary to secure to the lady the right over her own property, a decided aversion to the employment of her talent in any form in public was manifested by the gentleman. To so great an extent did this objection proceed, that Mademoiselle Lind's artist pride and self-respect were hurt; for although she had for some time past re-

solved to retire from the stage, she by no means intended to renounce all other forms of public performance. And thus it fell out that, after long and unsatisfactory discussions, the gentleman still adhering pertinaciously to his objection, Mademoiselle Lind was prevailed upon, by the most esteemed and most far-sighted of her English friends—including the bishop and his lady, and the friend so often alluded to, with whom she had formed a friendship through her Swedish relatives—Mademoiselle Lind then was, in the month of May, 1849, prevailed upon to break off the engagement she had formed with the young officer. Not, however, until the four farewell performances had been given.

So ended the history of "Jenny Lind's" matrimonial affair—an affair respecting which much "talk" was circulated, and extremely little was *known*. Immediately after the rupture above narrated, Mademoiselle Lind quitted London, and repaired to Paris, where she joined her English friend, then residing in that city for the benefit of her health.

While treating of Mademoiselle Lind as a theatrical vocalist, I will allow myself a digression, in order to describe her meeting at Paris with another celebrated artist of a former period. For the facts I am again indebted to a friendly pen:—

Whilst Jenny Lind was in Paris, her distinguished precursor of forty years, Madame Catalani, happened to have arrived there also, and nearly at the same moment. She had for many years remained stationary in her charming home at Florence, firmly resisting all persuasion to leave it for distant journeys. But shortly before Jenny Lind's arrival in Paris, Madame Vivier, Madame Catalani's daughter, had lost her husband; and as he was a Frenchman, she found it necessary to visit Paris in order to go through certain legal forms before taking possession of her share of his property. Madame Catalani, unable to resist her daughter's earnest wish that she would accompany her on this urgent occasion, accordingly set forth, and they crossed the Alps together. As French newspapers are not in the habit of chronicling the arrivals and departures of visitors to the capital, it might never have come to Jenny Lind's knowledge that Catalani was in the same city with

herself, had it not been for the accidental circumstance that the Italian lady was intimately acquainted with the English ambassador and his lady. These had known Madame Catalani at Florence many years, during which the Marquis of Normanby was British minister at the Tuscan Court, and had always maintained a friendly intercourse with her from that time.

Now, Mrs. G——, being also acquainted with the ambassador and Lady Normanby, she received an invitation one morning from their excellencies (in which her guest's name was included) to meet Madame Catalani at dinner. On communicating this invitation to Mademoiselle Lind, she broke forth into joyous exultation. "It has long been the fond wish of my heart," she said, "to be brought face to face with that great artist." She had always felt it to be a hopeless desire, since Catalani never would leave Florence, she had heard, but of all the bygone celebrities in that walk of art which she herself had pursued, Catalani was the one whom she most longed to see, &c., &c.

It is in truth worth noting, that Catalani's former career and reputation in England offered the nearest affinity to that of Jenny Lind. Both had enjoyed unbounded popularity, and that in the provinces as well as in the capital. Both had received social attentions from the nobility and gentry of the land; both had received large sums of money for their performances; both were of unsullied private character; as a singer and an actress, Catalani perhaps had excelled most of her contemporaries, and it was likewise Jenny Lind's good fortune to own this double combination of talent in *her* turn.

The invitation in question was thankfully accepted by Mr. and Mrs. G——, and by Mademoiselle Lind; but the curiosity and profound interest long felt by the latter about Madame Catalani, made her now impatient to obtain an interview with the Italian lady prior to the meeting at the Embassy, where the restraints imposed by the "locale" might possibly check the full expression of their mutual surprise and pleasure. Jenny accordingly set out one forenoon for Madame Catalani's lodgings (situate "au troisieme étage," in the Rue de la Paix), and sent in her name by the servant. It acted like a talisman upon the old cantatrice, who hastened out to welcome her distinguished visitor with heartfelt delight. She conducted Jenny into her *salon*, where they conversed together for

some time, with all the eagerness of artistic nature and warm sympathy. Catalani had known nothing of Mademoiselle Lind's presence in Paris, so that she was absolutely enchanted with this unexpected good fortune. She said that she had feared such a chance would never befall her, much as she had longed to see the celebrated singer who had excited the English mind in a way which recalled to her memory her own past triumphs. After conversing about half an hour, they parted, each rejoicing at the prospect of meeting so soon at the ambassador's table.

The dinner-party at the Embassy was a small one, no other company being invited except Mr. and Mrs. G——, Mademoiselle Lind, Madame Catalani and her daughter, and one English gentleman, a well-known amateur of the opera; the secretary of Embassy, and a sister of the Ambassadress being also present. After dinner, the weather being warm the party strolled in the garden attached to the Embassy—Catalani and Jenny Lind talking much together. In the evening, some little embarrassment arose about asking Jenny Lind to sing, because, as no one ever refuses a request made by the representative of majesty, the Marchioness considerately forbore to place the young Swede in a position of difficulty. But Catalani, who was burning with curiosity to hear Jenny Lind sing, perceived that there was some hesitation, went up to the "Nightingale," and asked her with grace and earnestness to oblige the company with a song, adding, "C'est la vieille Catalani qui desire vous entendre chanter, avant de mourir!"

Such an appeal from such a person, overcame all Jenny's habitual dislike to sing in private society. She sat down to the piano, and after a few bars of prelude, gave her incomparable "Non credea mirarti," playing the accompaniment herself.

Now, the *salon* at the Embassy was exceedingly ill-adapted for vocal display, being crowded with stuffed sofas; chairs, and other heavy furniture, curtains inclusive. Jenny Lind's beautiful voice was consequently heard under sensible disadvantage; moreover, she had to sing in a sitting posture instead of standing up. Nevertheless, the many obvious merits of her style, taste, and execution enchanted the Italian ear of Catalani, who sat on the ottoman in the centre of the room, enjoying the rare treat, rocking her body to and fro with delight and sympathy, and murmuring (loud enough

to be overheard by Mrs. G——, who sat by her side), "Ah! la bella cosa che la musica, quando si fa di quella maniera!"—and again, "Ah! la carissima! quanto bellissima!" Of course expression of cordial thanks and admiration on the part of all present followed the performance; and before separating for the night, Jenny was good enough to sing one or two more "arias" (among which "Ah! non Giunge" was included), to the renewed gratification of the interesting "ex-prima donna."

A visit to the residence of Mrs. G—— speedily followed the meeting at the Embassy, when Catalani insisted that Madame G—— and Jenny Lind should dine with *her* at her apartment. These ladies accordingly did so on one evening in the beginning of the month of June, 1849, and passed a truly pleasant evening, during which Catalani recounted anecdotes of her own past career, with a vivacity and charm quite remarkable in a person of her years. She still showed traces of her former beauty, retaining the intelligent beaming eye and the engaging smile of bygone days. Among other matters, "I was singing at Lisbon," she said, "when quite a young woman, full of gay spirits; and I remember running a foot-race for a wager with one of the English *attachés* there, and it was a hard struggle between us, I assure you. I should have won the race, I verily believe, had I not had the ill-luck to tear my 'caleçon,' which thus encumbered my legs, and so the young Englishman beat me."

The sequel to the Catalani story is melancholy. Not many days after the pleasant dinner-party at her apartment, it became known that this amiable lady was ill. Some said it was an attack of cholera—that dreadful disease being rife in the French capital at the time. Mr. and Mrs. G—— went shortly afterwards to inquire after the sick lady, and learned that she was no more! The suddenness of her death struck a sad chord upon the heart of Jenny Lind, who, having conceived a sincere regard for Madame Catalani, felt most painfully affected by the event. Catalani's expression, "vous entendre chanter, avant de mourir!" seemed to the imaginative Swede to have been a sort of "second sight," now that she was in truth "departed."

The party broke up about this period, traversing the city of Paris on June 13th, on which day it was declared to be "in a state of siege" (though scarcely any signs of disturbance were apparent), to reach the Great Northern Railway.

So ends the narrative. Turning to some hasty notes of travel that I myself made in the year 1846, I find the following entry relative to Madame Catalani:—

Tuesday.—Went with French to Catalani's villa. Conversation with her. Quiet at first. Became animated when talking of England and her former career. Sun-setting, and shining on her countenance. A great deal of poetry in her conversation. She told me she received her early education in a convent. She sang in the choir at the age of thirteen. Her voice was heard above the rest; and the priest and monks applauded, until restrained by the bishop, who was scandalised by the circumstance. Her master was the celebrated singer, Marchesi. She first appeared at Venice. Being invited by the Court of Portugal, she went to Lisbon. Remained there four years. Accepted an engagement for England. Passed through Paris. The Duc de Montebello having spoken of her to the Emperor Napoleon, she was invited to sing before him. He immediately rose from his seat, rushed forward, and said to his chamberlain, "*Ella est la chanteuse de ma Cour.*" Catalani replied, "*Je ne le veux pas. Je veux absolument aller en Angleterre.*" The Emperor turned his back, but gave orders that she should not have passports. She, however, obtained them for herself and family by bribing Talleyrand's Secretary, and took with her some English *détenus*. French told me that Catalani fell in love with her husband, Monsieur Vallabrecque, from seeing him in the pit during a performance.

We were joined by the husband. He told me that he had directed the opera in Paris, and had also had a great deal to do with our opera in England, and had lost greatly in these affairs. I promised to dine with them to-morrow. Catalani, speaking of Frezzolini, said, "*Voilà par example une artiste qui me plaît.*" One of her observations in speaking of genius among artists, "*Il y a même des danseuses qui ont de la poésie dans les jambes.*" When she played "Semiramide,"* and the actors, on presenting themselves and taking leave, approached to touch her hand, Catalani remonstrated, saying, "It is not usual to touch Queens, far less so proud and powerful a monarch as *Semiramis*." She said, when she had a part to study, she used to read the history of the subject.

Some additional entries relating to other eminent artists occur in this same year:

* Portogallo's "Semiramide."

Sunday at Bologna. Saw Rossini. Walked out with me. He explained to me his motives for declining to occupy himself further with composition. I reasoned with him. I even told him there was something of selfishness in the resolution. His reluctance seems to arise from the uncertain character of the public. He said, "To be sure, if a man has children he ought not to cease working, &c., &c." Dined with him. His observations are highly *spirituel*. His favourite author is Machiavelli.

Rossini spoke of the Congress of Verona, which was sitting whilst he was composing his "Semiramide" for Venice. Prince Metternich, at the Congress, he said, led them all—his manner eminently persuasive. Said it was he who planned the marriage of the Emperor with the Archduchess Maria Louisa.*

Monday.—Rossini visited me. Among other things, he observed, "It is impossible to judge of the qualities of a singer for the stage by hearing her only in a room. I have been deceived over and over again; and if any one says they can judge, you may say that I, Rossini, say the contrary." He gave as the reason for the scarcity of real singers at the present day, that the style of composition formerly required that the voice should undergo a severe discipline to qualify it to execute the music—now, he said, with the present school, as soon as a person knows his notes he is thought qualified to sing.

I have referred in one of the above notes to the unwillingness of Rossini to occupy himself with the performance of another opera. When Charles Dermoy succeeded to the direction of the "Italiens" at Paris, he wrote to Rossini, with whom he was on intimate terms, endeavouring by every possible argument to induce the composer to abandon his resolution. Rossini, in his reply, deeply regretted that he could not send him an opera, but, by way of compensation, sent a couple of Bologna sausages!

Let us close this digressive chapter, and return to the season business of 1849.

* The Prince subsequently told me that on this occasion he suggested to Rossini the adaptation of a German air—the same as our "Life let us cherish"—and was charmed shortly afterwards with the ingenious manner in which Rossini had treated the theme both in the overture and in the opera of "Semiramide."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Season of 1849—Engagement of Alboni, Parodi, and Frezzolini for the season of 1849—Efficiency of the "troupe," as a whole—Giuliani—*Début* of Mademoiselle Parodi—Interest taken in her success by Madame Pasta—Jenny Lind consents to sing, in the Theatre, the opera of "Il Flauto Magico," of Mozart—Incomplete success of the performance—Jenny Lind reappears in Opera—Delight of the audience at her return to the boards—Her farewell night described—The Director is led to hope that Madame Sontag may return to the lyric stage—Good offices of M. Thalberg in bringing this to an issue.

THERE was now small chance of my availing myself of the services of Jenny Lind in 1849, and I had only to toil over the resources that remained to me, so as to work them to the best advantage. At the head of the list, in the semi-private prospectus which I had issued, stood Mademoiselle Alboni, whose first appearance in England at Covent Garden had excited so great a degree of enthusiasm. Then were announced Madame Frezzolini, who had already made her *début* at Her Majesty's Theatre, but under disadvantageous circumstances of health; Mademoiselle Parodi, well known to be the favourite pupil of Pasta, about whose appearance considerable curiosity was created; Mademoiselle Gazzaniga, the favourite *prima donna* of Turin; and Madame Giuliani, known to the Parisian musical public as Madame Julian van Gelder. To Gardoni were to be super-

added two new tenors: Bordas, a popular singer at the "Italiens" at Paris, and Calzolari, a reputed Rossinian tenor of great promise. Lablache, Coletti, Beletti, and Federico Lablache, still formed the strong phalanx of bass voices as before. To the ballet flew back Carlotta Grisi, Rosati, Marie Taglioni, and Petit Stephan, under the ballet-mastership of Paul Taglioni. The forces which I at last marshalled to do battle with the rival enemy at Covent Garden, might be said at least to make a very goodly show. Other powerful allies, who will make their appearance in the somewhat confused drama of the season, were also sought in unexpected regions, with an infinity of expenditure, diplomacy, and *finesse*.

Her Majesty's Theatre, then, opened on the 15th of March, with Alboni, now in the height of her popularity, as *Cenerentola*. The success of this great singer was necessarily triumphant; and the season, in appearance at all events, could not have commenced under happier auspices. The public is a child in many respects—in many respects, too, a spoiled child, a very spoiled child. It cried still for its favourite toy—Jenny Lind. However brilliant the new toy placed before it for its delectation and amusement, it would not take to it as, under other circumstances, it might have done. The favourite image and idol of the last two years was ever in its thoughts. However eminently successful as was the *début* of Mademoiselle Alboni at Her Majesty's Theatre, it hardly carried with it that *prestige* to which it was fairly entitled. Not less brilliant again was the promise of the ballet. Although the choreographic work produced on the opening night was already well known to the London public, as the "*Diable à Quatre*" ("The

Devil to Pay" of the English stage),* it was new to the opera boards, and, combining the attractions of Carlotta Grisi, Rosati, Marie Taglioni, and Paul Taglioni, offered an entertainment unusually brilliant at the (generally less favoured) pre-Easter commencement of the season. I had conscientiously done my best to secure a successful opening under the circumstances; but still, the hankering of the public for that which it longed for, all the more as it seemed beyond its grasp, was undeniable.

Even another leading card in my hand was played before Easter. Mademoiselle Giuliani (Madame Jullian van Gelder), who had earned laurels at the then Académie Royale (at the period mentioned the Académie Nationale) of Paris, in Verdi's *riffaciamento* of the "Lombardi" (entitled "Jerusalem"), appeared in "Ernani." This lady's success was undoubted. She was more than favourably received by the subscribers, although she came at an evil time. Not so fortunate was Bordas, the *Ernani* of the revival, despite the advantages of his person, and the vigour of his acting. The London public considered his voice harsh and unsympathetic; and what

* The history of this old subject shows a peculiar tenacity of life. It was originally produced at the London "Theatre Royal," in the seventeenth century, as the "Devil of a Wife," and afterwards modified into the "Devil to Pay." From London it was transferred to France, where it became the subject of an opera comique, called "Le Diable à Quatre." In modern times, it was ransacked as a grand ballet; and as such, was again produced in Paris, and transferred to the boards of Drury Lane. It was then used in a burlesque form at the Adelphi Theatre, under the title of "Taming a Tartar," and was eventually composed as an opera by Balfe, under the original (English) title of "The Devil's to Pay." Another burlesque on the same subject, by Mr. H. J. Byron, is even now performing at the Strand Theatre.

favour could any other qualities find, in its estimation, when the one predominant element failed in attraction? The result was the same when the two new artists appeared in the "Due Foscari." Mademoiselle Giuliani rose more and more in favour. Bordas disappointed no expectations, because none had been raised. With the attraction of "Le Diable à Quatre," the season struggled onwards to the close of its preliminary portion before Easter.

Shortly after Easter appeared Mademoiselle Parodi, the favourite pupil and friend of the great Pasta. Upon her, it was said, the mantle of the illustrious *prima donna* had descended. Pasta herself had declared that, in the person of this object of her solicitude and her future hopes, she herself was to rise again before the world. These sentiments were repeated by Madame Pasta in a letter to me, in which she recommended "la mia Teresa" to my care. The delight of the now aged *prima donna* in seeing herself revived in her favourite pupil, is apparent in every phrase. She writes: "Piena di riconoscenza;" and, in the fulness of her heart, exclaims, "Oh! beata l'Inghilterra! Che Dio la renda sempra più felice!" The zealous and eager sympathy of the instructress with the pupil was unbounded. Mademoiselle Parodi appeared in one of the most favourite and celebrated characters of *la* Pasta, although the choice of this *rôle de début* was bold and even dangerous. As has been seen in the *quasi* failure of Jenny Lind herself, the most popular and most adored of all *prime donne* of the time, in the part of *Norma*, it was impossible even for the most petted of pets to dare to undertake the task of rivalry, even in seeming, with *the*

one who had been so long associated in English estimation with the true ideal of the Druid Priestess. Of all Madame Grisi's parts, *Norma* was the one in which no effort of rivalry was to be endured. The success of Mademoiselle Parodi, however, on her first *début*, was in appearance very great. Moulded as her whole style, both as singer and actress, were upon her great prototype, she gave to a new generation an idea of the "Pasta" of their fathers; and, with old opera-goers, revived in some degree the memories of the past. Her voice was full and melodious, but "veiled," like that of her instructress, in its upper notes. Her acting was distinguished, as had been that of the Siddons of the operatic stage, by simple grandeur, rather than by fiery impulse. Her success, as has been said, was great on her appearance; but no evening of triumph filled the void left in the hearts of the public by the seclusion of Jenny Lind.

In the meanwhile, one step had already been taken by Mademoiselle Lind, in retractation of her resolution to appear no more upon the boards of a theatre. After considerable discussion between the gentleman with whom the future destiny of the young singer was then understood to be linked, and myself—the stipulation that the concerts in which she was to take part, should take place at Exeter Hall and at Exeter Hall alone, was waived; and it was announced in the managerial prospectus that Mademoiselle Lind would sing in six concerts at Her Majesty's Theatre. The first of these "Grand Classical Performances," as they were termed, took place (within two days of the first appearance of Mademoiselle Parodi) on Thursday, the 15th April. The concert consisted of a "recital," as it would be called in modern musical phraseology, of Mozart's opera of "Il Flauto Magico"

in its entirety, in the ordinary concert form, without "scenery, dresses, or decorations."

The result of this experiment was a perfect failure. Could it have been otherwise? Any device to treat a lyrical drama as if it were not a drama, or, in other words, to cheat a theatrical representation of its necessary appliances, so as to evade the "stage," could be nothing but a failure. The great masterpiece of Mozart, without the essential accessories of scenery and action, without the illustrative resources which the composer himself contemplated, was simply rendered dreary and incomprehensible. Where was the well-known "Jenny Lind" crush? The house was comparatively empty. Where was the customary enthusiasm amounting to a mania? The applause was cold and feeble. The singer, who had been accustomed to hear those same walls ring with plaudits, could not but feel chilled at the faint and rare echoes of that night, so different from the noisy demonstrations of the previous year. The "Flauto Magico" was accordingly the first and last of these disappointing "grand classical performances," permission for which had been with so much difficulty wrung from Mademoiselle Lind.

The fortunes of the theatre were to be maintained in this dilemma by Mademoiselle Parodi, in the part of *Norma*, in which she continued to draw satisfactory houses; and by a new ballet, called "Electra ou la Pléiade Perdue," composed by Paul Taglioni. This last obtained more than the customary share of success, considering that pantomimic ballet was beginning gradually to fall out of favour, the principal part being admirably filled by Carlotta Grisi.

As Achilles retired to his tent, so the "Swedish

Nightingale" had retired to the seclusion of her Brompton villa; but unlike the Greek hero, not to brood long over her comparative discomfiture. Could she retire from before the English public, which had raised her upon so high a pedestal, and had bowed down and worshipped her so fervently, after an evening marked by such a cold, formal, and mortifying reception? It was more than could be expected of a woman who, whatever her aspirations or preferences in another direction, had the artist soul still stirring strong within her. An official announcement soon informed the delighted world, that although "Mademoiselle Lind had intended to take leave of the subscribers and the public in a series of concerts," yet "it having been urged that concerts would not be regarded as equally satisfactory," she had "generously consented to suspend her intention of retiring from the stage," and would therefore appear in a few more performances. This resolution—a tardy one, scarcely compensating the inconveniences caused by previous refusals—was nevertheless hailed with satisfaction by both public and manager.

On Thursday, the 26th of April, the would-be fugitive *prima donna* reappeared on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre, in her great part of "La Sonnambula." Many of the self-styled "interpreters" of public sentiment pretended that the chain of sympathy which had attached her to the public had been too suddenly snapped asunder to be restored to its former strength; that the tide of popular feeling, untowardly checked when it had reached to such an unprecedented height, had been diverted, and would never flow in the same channel again. But all these suppositions turned out utterly ill-founded. Never had Jenny Lind been re-

ceived with a more enthusiastic welcome, or with acclamations more fervent, from a house crowded to the ceiling, than on the night in which she returned once more to the stage. The scene of excitement was perhaps more agitating than any former scenes of bygone triumphs. It seemed not only as though a favourite idol had been restored to the public, but as if a child, whom some difference had temporarily estranged, had been received back to the arms of its family. In truth, the emotion on both sides appeared equally profound. The evening was signalised also, it may be said *en passant* (for every other consideration seemed utterly swamped in the one exciting event), by the first appearance of Signor Calzolari, an excellent and most satisfactory young tenor of (what was denominated) "the good old school."

In "Lucia di Lammermoor," in "La Figlia del Reggimento," and in "Roberto," Mademoiselle Lind resumed and terminated the course of her brilliant performances, which were only four in number. It was generally understood that her appearance in that opera in which she had first stood before an English public, was to be her last upon any stage. Perhaps in this matter Mademoiselle Jenny Lind may be cited as a rare and almost solitary instance of artistic stability in the announcement of a "last farewell." Past generations (probably in all times since opera heroines have trod the boards) have known so many "last farewells," and "positively last farewells," and "final farewells," to which there was no finality, that a "last farewell" announcement has come to be greeted by the practised play-goer with an incredulous smile. But Jenny Lind was firm in her purpose, even when tortured by conflicting influences.

The night of Thursday, May the 18th, 1849, did really witness her "last appearance upon any stage." Jenny Lind retired in earnest, not, it is true, from the exercise of her profession, but from the theatrical boards, and this in the very zenith of her powers. Never perhaps during the whole of her career was there an occasion on which she bore away so great a triumph as when she appeared in the true sphere of her vocation for the last time This was a night of even unwonted sympathy and enthusiasm—a night of applause that seemed to know no bounds—a night of recalls, and again recalls, and one more last recall, as though the public could not part from her, or bear the thought of never looking upon her again. And so, with such heartfelt adieux, was Jenny Lind finally lost to the stage.

Though Jenny Lind was indeed gone from us, she continued on friendly terms with her late manager. In the July of the same year, she wrote thus (in English) from Schlangenbad, whither she had gone to recruit her health, somewhat affected by her late mental agitation: "I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of communicating to you how truly happy I am over the immense success the Countess of Rossi enjoys by Her Majesty's Theatre, and at the same time congratulating you to this fortunate event . . . . What I feel relieved I cannot tell it! A heavy weight is gone from me. I now can with all truth tell myself that not alone *my* presence is now not the slightest necessary, but much better supplied! And now you have nothing more to complain of; neither to make *me* the slightest trouble, even in the most distant future, about my going back for to sing by your opera; and this assurance is really a great comfort to me!"

The blank was great—the void scarcely to be filled; but, as has already been intimated, I had still a secret winning card in my hand—a card which circumstances had forbidden me to reveal, but to play which, the time seemed now come. To explain the history of this "card," it will be necessary to turn back to a far earlier period.

For some time past I had conceived hopes, from certain rumours which had reached my ears, that the Countess Rossi, the once admired Mademoiselle Sontag, the precursor of Jenny Lind in a previous generation, the adored of all *dilettanti*, might be induced, in spite of her high position as wife of the Sardinian envoy at the Court of Berlin, to return to the stage. A generation, it is true, had already passed away since *the* Sontag had taken her leave of an English public on the boards of the then "King's Theatre." But I had learned, on the most reliable authority, that, in spite of time, and absence from the exercise of her profession, the voice of the Countess Rossi was as brilliant, as fresh, as pure, as it had been more than twenty years ago; that her marvellous execution was unchanged; that her personal appearance, although she had been for so many years a wife and a mother, had lost but little of that charm of beauty and grace which had exercised so great a fascination over all hearts in times gone by. That such should be the case amounted to the marvellous and incredible. But I had faith; and, strange to tell, that faith was based upon a truthful and solid foundation. Mademoiselle Sontag was, then, my next "card;" but the hindrances to this my newly-conceived project were great: the diplomatic manœuvres to be spun, unravelled, and finally woven into a tangible web, were delicate and

difficult of handling. Where, indeed, was diplomacy ever to be used, if not in dealing with an ambassadress? *

Early in February I opened the campaign by establishing a communication with the Countess Rossi through the Earl of Westmoreland, at that time the English Minister at the Court of Prussia. But this move was apparently "a mistake." The possibility of the return of Madame Sontag to the stage depended upon political circumstances influencing the diplomatic arrangements of the Sardinian Court. To take a foreign diplomatist into his confidence, under such delicate circumstances, was not permissible to the Sardinian Envoy, even had such a contingency as the return of his wife to the stage been looked upon as possible; and it was more than doubtful, notwithstanding what had reached my ears, that such a thought had really ever been entertained. It is no matter for surprise, consequently, to learn that the Earl of Westmoreland's reply to me was to the effect that, although the proposal, conveyed in such delicate terms, was considered flattering, an acceptance of it was quite out of the question; "as," adds the English Minister, "I was well aware it would be."

But I had another ally at Berlin; one who, in this especial conjuncture, proved at once a more judicious and more powerful agent. Where the ambassador had failed, the

* A strange notion has prevailed, that Scribe founded his comic opera of "L'Ambassadrice" upon the story of the return of Madame Sontag to the stage. But such a tradition would be the greatest calumny against her excellent husband, Count Rossi. The best refutation exists in the fact that the opera of Scribe and Auber appeared many years before the event here narrated.

artist might prevail. The great pianist, Sigismund Thalberg, always a staunch friend of mine, undertook the negociation. The artist mind could and did open itself to the fellow artist. Early in April, Thalberg wrote to me to the following purport, showing, at least, that the idea *was* entertained: "Nothing positive is decided; but there is every hope of eventual success. The prospect of returning to the stage seems to afflict the Countess greatly; she even shed tears at the thought of it! But economy is the order of the day in Piedmont, on account of the millions to be re-imbursed to Austria. Twelve envoys have already been recalled, and possibly her husband may be the next. Or only a *chargé d'affaires* may be henceforth appointed, and salaries may be reduced one-half. Under such circumstances the Countess feels that the sacrifice may become imperative upon her, for the sake of the future fortunes of her children. In a week, perhaps, her fate may be decided, and then she will write immediately to London. I told her how important it was to be able to announce her; but she declared that the whole negociation must depend upon the strictest secrecy."

The terms (£6000 for six months) were also arranged at this interview, and even the parts in which the returning *prima donna* should reappear were formally discussed. Not only then was the proposal of the engagement of Madame Sontag at Her Majesty's Theatre not "out of the question," but it was considered by the lady under all its bearings.

During April and May I was in direct correspondence with the Count and Countess Rossi. But all was still in doubt and abeyance. The course of operatic arrangements seems ever destined to run as little smooth as

"the course of true love." At first the Countess writes: "When M. Thalberg was here, everything led me to suppose that in a few days I might be able to accept your proposition. But political events since then seem to have consolidated the position of Piedmont, and you will doubtless comprehend that it is not at such a moment I can take a resolution, to be justified only by an absolute necessity." "I am grieved not to be able to give you a more satisfactory answer. But you must admit that I have no controul over circumstances. The question, 'to be or not to be,' will probably be decided this month, or in the commencement of the next (May), and as soon as a decision can be taken, you shall have immediate intelligence." Again on the 4th of May, she writes: "Decisive steps have been taken at Turin. By the 15th of May, at the latest, we must receive a categorical reply. Should it turn out in favour of our intentions, I might be in London by the 25th. I feel how painfully difficult your position is, and I should be indeed happy to be able to terminate your cruel uncertainties; but you cannot fail of understanding the delicacy and difficulty with which our position is environed. As soon as I shall be once more Mademoiselle Sontag, your interests shall be solely mine, with all my heart and soul." On the 12th of May came another letter, which seemed to overthrow all the hopes which I had entertained: "Letters have at last arrived from Turin," it said, "but they are not favourable to our expectations. I am compelled to admit, with regret, that every probability of my coming to London this year has vanished. It would surely be better for your own interests that you should count on me no more. Still *le dernier mot n'est pas encore dit*, and, in the present

state of things, the slightest incident may change the whole course of events."

Thus did the changes of the political world in those days of revolutionary movement mix themselves up with the anxieties, uncertainties, and struggles of the management of Her Majesty's Theatre. Nothing could be more embarrassing and tantalising than the new difficulty into which I was plunged. The winning card was so near my hand, and yet I could not grasp it. I could not even publish my hopes of being able to play a game so obviously favourable to my interests; for every letter enjoined and demanded secrecy relative to the public appearance of the fascinating ambassadress upon the stage. Well might the lady admit with regret that the position in which she was obliged to place me was both difficult and painful!

It was not until the 9th of June that I at last received letters from both the Count and Countess Rossi, informing me that all the political obstacles to the proposed plan had been removed; that their establishment in Berlin was to be broken up, and that they would be in London towards the end of the month. Terms were agreed upon. An engagement, not only for the remainder of the season of 1849, but for the forthcoming season of 1850, was accepted; and in a very short time, after all these delays and hesitations, I was able to proclaim the prize I had obtained, "and to announce the reappearance of the celebrated *prima donna*, Mademoiselle Sontag, on the stage of Her Majesty's Theatre, after an absence of one-and-twenty years from those boards."

The announcement was received of course with intense interest and curiosity. Middle-aged opera-goers asked themselves how they were again to greet the beautiful

Sontag of their youth; young *dilettanti* asked themselves what they were to expect from the *diva* of their fathers. It was a strange state of things. Most people shook their heads at the bare notion of the assurance that the Sontag could be *the* Sontag of so many previous years ago. The doubts were natural, but they were soon to be confirmed or dispelled.

I went over to Berlin in person to offer to the Countess my escort to London; and on Saturday, the 7th of July, this interesting *début* took place, in Donizetti's "Linda di Chamouni." *The* Sontag once more trod those boards which had been the scene of her early triumphs. The sympathy her reappearance had created was evidenced by the enthusiastic, and it may be said, affectionate reception with which she was greeted by an overcrowded house. The cheering was universal, genuine, unusually prolonged. That she herself should be at first deeply affected, even to tears, at a greeting so heart-felt and spontaneous, was well conceivable. The revival of old memories, at those exciting and once familiar sounds, joined to the thought of the causes which had placed her in that arena, must have moved her profoundly. A glance at the box where sate the husband and children for whose sake this great and noble sacrifice had been made, gave her the necessary courage. Sontag subdued her emotion. In a few minutes she was once more the artist, and the artist alone.

That a halo of interest was thrown around the high-placed lady, who had descended from her pedestal, and quitted the pride and charm of her social and domestic life to resume professional duties, long since laid aside, was perfectly intelligible. But it was not as the heroine of a romance of real life that Sontag reappeared;

not as the Countess, who from well-appreciated motives had reassumed the dramatic mantle. It was as the artist alone that she had come to earn the suffrages of the public—as the artist alone that she desired to be judged. It was to sound judgment, and not to mere curiosity and sympathy, however legitimately awakened, that she appealed. And in that judgment she found her reward! Her return to the stage was one long triumph.

All had felt that it must be a marvel, if, after more than twenty years, this gifted *prima donna* could return with her powers unimpaired. Yet the marvel was here—an unquestionable fact. Her voice *was* "as fresh, pure, and beautiful as ever." Madame Sontag brought back an artistic skill, matured and perfected by the continued study which, since her retirement, had been to her a labour of love. The beauty, which had exercised so great a fascination over an elder generation, was, strange to say, but little changed. It was remodelled rather than effaced, whilst the figure seemed almost untouched by time. The pleasing contour of the face, the beaming and expressive eye, and, above all, the winning smile which formerly had stolen away so many hearts, were all there. Men declared that, with the most clear and searching of opera-glasses they could not give her more than five-and-twenty. She was, in truth, a living marvel! And, more strange than all, the Sontag who had been deemed by a former generation somewhat deficient as an actress (although the most exquisite of soprano singers), was discovered to have warmth, animation, expression, even power, as a dramatic artist! The fascination of her histrionic talent came to be as great as that of her

faultless execution. The public is said to be a "wayward" creature; but, on the contrary, it is extremely difficult to be moved from prepossessions once formed for good or for evil. Whatever change may supervene in an artist, the public is loath to admit a change into its own formed opinions. Sontag left the stage with the reputation of being "no actress." On her return, it was almost impossible to persuade this public, wedded to traditions, that she was (what really was the case) one of the most finished and exquisite histrionic artists.

Ere long the Sontag *furore* promised to equal the Lind mania. The houses were once more crammed. The excitement of Madame Sontag's performances was nearly as uproarious as in the great days of her immediate predecessor. In spite of powerful rivalry, the fresh "card" in my hand seemed destined to win the game. In the "Barbiere di Seviglia," her exquisite finish and grace exercised the same fascinating influence as on her first appearance. As *Amina* in the "Sonnambula," she had an even more difficult trial to sustain. The part was considered the best, as it had been the most celebrated of all the great impersonations of Jenny Lind, whose last performance of it was recent in the memory of all the *habitués* of Her Majesty's Theatre. The task of Madame Sontag, under such circumstances, was bold, almost hazardous; but again she triumphed. Her charm in the part was so great, that all thought of comparison was effaced from the minds of her listeners. The new *Amina* was hailed as rapturously as if no rival—much less one who was considered beyond the reach of competition—had ever existed; and, in spite of all prepossessions, her powers as an actress were now universally declared equal to her finished style as a *cantatrice*. Her

rapidly rising progress in public estimation was as steady and sure as her *début* had been brilliant.

There were many old opera-goers who recollected the sensation created by the *Desdemona* of Madame Sontag in years past. There were some who could remember Sontag's performance of this part to the *Otello* of Madame Pasta. This caprice of the latter celebrated *prima donna*, I may remark, was not distinguished by any satisfactory results; but the acting of the part was superb, and quite sufficed to throw into shade any histrionic power in the *Desdemona*, who won *her* laurels by her sweetness of voice and charm of execution.

Madame Sontag once more appeared as *Desdemona;* but with execution matured and strengthened, and a histrionic power of which in former times she was not considered a mistress, and the opera proved another of her great successes. In this opera she was ably supported by Moriani, who had now been added to my already long list of tenors. In a grand Morning Concert she enraptured her audience by singing in four languages, viz: the "Zingari," of Donizetti, in Italian—the great scena of "Der Freischütz," in German—the "With Verdure Clad," of the "Creation," in English—and the "Grace! Grace!" of "Robert le Diable," in French.

The "Nozze di Figaro," in which the gifted singer warbled the part of *Susanna* with unusual grace and feeling (supported by Parodi as the *Countess*, and Alboni as *Cherubino*), was the last opera in which Madame Sontag appeared during the season of 1849. Her success had been all that could be hoped—far greater indeed than had been expected. Under the guise of her engaging smile, fortune seemed again to have beamed upon the theatre. At all events, the promise for the

ensuing season of 1850 was more cheering under the new auspices of Sontag than might have been anticipated a few months before. Still the season of 1849 cannot be pronounced prosperous. The indecisions and harassing events of the early part of the season acted disastrously on the finances of the establishment. From similar causes of doubt, the arrival of Madame Sontag was too late to repair fully the dire effects of the past. In my own opinion, the retirement of Jenny Lind was "*le commencement de la fin.*"

Amidst all the struggles and difficulties of the season of 1849, my activity had been unremitting. When I felt my chief prop breaking down beneath me, I had stretched forth my hands on every side to seize every available reed that might support me. It has been seen how the strongest and best support was found in Madame Sontag, and how, by means of this plank of safety, I once more regained a firm footing. But in the meanwhile other chances of help, towards which I had anxiously looked, were manifold. Rubini, the great tenor, still the object of public regret, had been again invoked "to the rescue." "Come once more," I had written; "you will save a friend—you will save this great establishment!" "Your letter has touched me profoundly," was the great tenor's answer, "but it cannot be. A thousand circumstances render my reappearance a matter of impossibility. It costs me more than you can suppose to persist in this resolution; but I must abide by it—you cannot, must not count on me." Further correspondence ensued. Fresh appeals were made by the Director of Her Majesty's Theatre; but Rubini was inexorable.

With Madame Frezzolini I had also been in negocia-

tion. This celebrated *prima donna* had not, perhaps, quite maintained the position which was considered her due, owing, it was said, to adverse circumstances of health and spirits. But her success at St. Petersburg in the previous winter had been very great. At all events, she might form one more possible *planche de salut.* But Madame Frezzolini was engaged for the theatre at Moscow after the close of the Imperial Italian Opera at Petersburg; and, moreover, the prospect of a long journey in severe weather caused her alarm; so that the negociation failed for that year. The re-engagement of Sophie Cruvelli had been warmly urged by the Earl of Westmoreland, from Berlin. The lady herself was desirous to reappear at Her Majesty's Theatre; and her letter on the subject is a singular self-reproval for her want of agreement with her manager during her first engagement. "Quand je vous ai vu pour la dernière fois," she writes, "vous m'avez dit, 'Quand vous serez devenue raisonable, écrivez moi. J'ai lutté avec mon amour propre avant de vous avouer que, peut-être, à Londres je n'ai pas tout à fait agi comme j'ai dû le faire envers vous et dans mon veritable interêt. Vous voyez bien qu'il faut que j'ai bien de la confiance en vous pour être franche de cette manière." But in the confusion of the opening of the season when, failing Jenny Lind, so many other negociations were pending, it had been impossible for the direction to render these suggestions available. Cruvelli was only secured for a future day. On every side, then, as has been seen, I had endeavoured to repair the disaster which had befallen me by the most active zeal, by every available resource, and at an enormous expense. Alboni, Parodi, and finally Madame Sontag, had shone as principal stars in the operatic hemisphere.

But it was hard to shake off the effects of the blow struck by the retirement of Jenny Lind.

It is curious to see how difficult it was to establish credence in the fact that Jenny Lind had positively retired from the stage. In a letter written by Mr. Balfe, the conductor, in the autumn, from Berlin (in which he mentions Madame Fiorentini as an improvable singer and actress, and as "the most beautiful creature that ever trod a stage"), he speaks of meeting Jenny Lind in Frankfort. "She asked a great deal about your prospects for next season, with *very great interest.* I used all my endeavours to induce her not to quit the stage; and I think that you stand a great chance of her. She spoke of you and your managerial affairs with a great deal more interest than I ever heard her do before." So little reliance would people place in the sincerity and resolution of an artist who could wish to quit the scene of her triumphs amid the full tide of her popularity!

The remainder of the year 1849 was occupied by a provincial journey with Madame Sontag. By this enterprise, I had justly been expecting to cover the deficit of the last troubled season. The success of Madame Sontag, as has been said, was great in London, but unfortunately it lasted too short a time. She had not sung long enough in London, it must be supposed, to "warm up" the provinces to that pitch of enthusiasm which marked the "progress" of Mademoiselle Jenny Lind. The *tournée* (as it is termed in artistic vocabulary) was far from fulfilling my legitimate hopes; while the enormous sums paid to the artists, and to the principal lady in particular, were not sufficiently balanced by the returns to allow me to cover the deficit of the past London season. It was signalized,

however, by the generous conduct of Monsieur Thalberg in refusing to receive the remuneration to which he was entitled for his own share of the work in accompanying the artists, and also by the animated correspondence of the Countess Rossi during the journey—a journey sufficiently fatiguing to one to whom modern artist life, involving rapid railway travelling, was new. In a letter from Exeter, she wrote:—"I mean to recompense myself for the loss of that beautiful Edinburgh, by singing the 'Casta Diva' in the very temple of the Druids, on Salisbury Plain."

Another event which marked the end of the season of 1849 must not be passed unnoticed. The failure of the rival enterprise of the Italian Opera at Covent Garden had resulted in the bankruptcy of Mr. Delafield, the last lessee and responsible manager. Overtures had been made on the part of the gentlemen connected with the recent undertaking to merge both operas in one; and advantageous terms were offered to me to retire from the management of Her Majesty's Theatre, in order to facilitate this design. But in these terms I declined to acquiesce. I had already set on foot other schemes connected with this vast enterprise. These were no less than to obtain the concession to myself of the Italian Opera in Paris, then in the hands of Ronconi, and to combine in my own grasp the two great speculations.

CHAPTER XIX.

Provincial Tour of Mademoiselle Sontag—A Railway Accident—Sontag Concerts in Paris—Difficulty in obtaining the Salle du Conservatoire—Kindness of the President Louis Napoleon—Great success of the Concerts—Resuscitation of the Faubourg St. Germain—Season of 1850—Parodi in "Medea"—Reappearance of Sims Reeves—Catherine Hayes—Baucardé—"La Tempesta," by Halévy and Scribe—Fête at the "Chancellors"—Reappearance of Pasta—The "Black Malibran"—*Début* of Fiorentini—Direction of the "Italiens" at Paris—New Difficulties—Victor Hugo and Rachel.

THE professional excursions of Madame Sontag in the English provinces, during the winter of 1849, had not, as I have remarked, the satisfactory results which were legitimately to be expected from them. Many untoward circumstances combined to throw hindrances in the way of a more complete success. Local drawbacks, political movements, and, above all, the unusually rigorous season of the year, seemed leagued together to render the journey as disastrous as possible. Misfortune followed upon misfortune, and an accident, which nearly proved fatal to the whole party, including Calzolari, Federico Lablache, and Piatti, so lamentably affected the health of the Countess Rossi that she was for a considerable time unable to sing. On the 29th of December (1849), the artistic "troupe," accompanied by Count Rossi, was proceeding from Glasgow to Aber-

deen. The weather was fearful—the snow was falling in heavy masses, the cold was piercing, the wind tempestuous and cutting. At a short distance from Laurencekirk, the train ran into a snowdrift of more than six feet in depth, and became immoveable. The snow-bearing blast was rapidly burying the carriages. It was a task not only of difficulty but of extreme danger, to rescue the party from their position and bear them to the top of the cutting. Fresh risks here awaited them from the bitterly cold wind, which was perceptibly freezing the human body into insensibility. Amidst the blinding snow, the artists were however enabled to reach the dwelling of a hospitable farmer, where every available aid and comfort was afforded to the sufferers.

Count Rossi, in a letter to me, thus describes the "narrow escape:" "Had the heart of Madame de Rossi failed her when she found she had to adventure herself in the midst of the darkness of the night, with a hurricane that flung us down one over the other as we left the carriages, and in a snowdrift of six feet in depth—had she shown less courage and energy, we should certainly have had to deplore a fatal result. We should have all been found the next morning frozen dead in our carriages. By midnight every trace of them had disappeared under the snow. Had we had another hundred steps to take before reaching the house, I verily believe we should have all died by the way. Lablache and my groom both fell senseless on reaching the house. The former has not yet recovered the use of his fingers, which were frozen. Poor Mapleson is still in his bed at Laurencekirk. Heaven preserved us from a fatal disaster; but this cruel accident has completely pros-

trated Madame de Rossi. Twice she fell, up to the waist, in the depths of the snow, and having no change of linen, except a pair of stockings lent her by the farmer's wife, she was obliged to remain, wet through and pierced with cold, until her clothes dried on her body by the fireside. You may judge how her voice has suffered in consequence, and how impossible it would be for her to sing at the required concerts," &c., &c.

One of the immediate results of this untoward accident was, that the pre-arranged concerts were necessarily postponed, until time and care should restore not only the powers of the shattered *prima donna*, but those of all the artists engaged in the expedition.

The year 1850 certainly opened inauspiciously for my speculations. Visits, however, to Belvoir Castle (the Duke of Rutland's), and to Raby Castle (the Duke of Cleveland's)—at both of which houses the Count and Countess Rossi were received, not only with the consideration due to them, but with an almost affectionate solicitude—proved of material advantage in restoring the health and spirits of the lady, and once more giving tone to her voice; so that the provincial concerts were consequently resumed, with varying success.

For some time I had been in Paris, for the purpose of arranging a series of concerts, in which Madame Sontag was to be the great attraction, both there and also in Brussels. To these concerts the Count and Countess Rossi were altogether opposed. The lady was unwilling to appear, for the first time, in either of these cities, otherwise than upon the stage. "Remember, my dear Mr. Lumley," wrote the expostulating Count, "that curiosity is one of the principal motives of a Parisian success, and that you deprive yourself of more than half

the aid of this great motive by making Madame de Rossi appear, to her decided disadvantage, in concerts, without the aids of scenery, dresses, and animation of acting. An eminently fastidious public, like the Parisian, will never judge with any other feeling than that of its *esprit*. It has no heart like the public of London."

But on this point, after a considerable struggle, the Count and Countess Rossi gave way. It was not in dealing with such natures as theirs that I could experience my greatest difficulties; the hindrances with which I had to contend in carrying out my scheme for the "Sontag-Concerts" in Paris arose in other quarters.

While entertaining the project of bringing forward Madame Sontag in the French capital, I had set my mind upon the large concert-rooms of the Conservatoire, as most appropriate for my purpose. I accordingly made application to the Minister of the Interior for leave to use these rooms, and a promise that permission would be granted was at first given without any seeming hesitation. Relying upon this concession, from so high an authority, I took measures accordingly, and little did I dream, while making my preliminary arrangements, that difficulty upon difficulty, evasion upon evasion, were to assail me at every step, and impede my progress. At first I was only met by an expression of doubt whether the project could be carried out, inasmuch as it was very "unusual" to allow any concerts to take place in the Conservatoire, especially at a period of the year set apart for the celebrated instrumental performances of the establishment. When active measures had already been taken and arrangements made, I was startled by the information that objections had been urged by the president of the "Commission des

Théâtres" before the Minister of the Interior, and that the minister considered it his duty to obtain the sanction of this "commission" before dispatching the letter of authorisation long since promised me. In reply to my remonstrances, I was informed that the tempest roused by my application was violent, and that it would be better to apply for the Italian Opera House, then in the possession of Signor Ronconi.

There is no doubt that had I been previously aware of the hostile opposition which my project was destined to provoke, I should have made my arrangements differently; but not being a man to yield to groundless enmity, or to be daunted by difficulties, I persisted at all ventures in my design. Finding that so powerful an opponent as the Directeur des Beaux Arts, was taking active steps against my project, I felt that I had but one resource left, and that lay in an appeal to the President of the Republic, the Prince Louis Napoleon. With the future Emperor of France, when an exile in England, I had been well acquainted. He had been a constant subscriber to Her Majesty's Theatre, was a frequent guest at my house, and had "assisted" at the afternoon *fêtes* given by me at my residence, called "The Chancellor's," at Fulham, where he had entered heart and soul into the amusements of the hour. Frequenters of these "champêtres" entertainments may remember one occasion when Prince Louis Napoleon figured in the same quadrille with Taglioni, Cerito, and Carlotta Grisi; having the Director of Her Majesty's Theatre as his *vis-à-vis*. The Prince and I had frequently dined in company at Gore House, the residence of the late Countess of Blessington, where all that was distinguished in literature and art was constantly assembled; and it

may be worth recording, in connection with the Prince's known firm reliance on his destiny that, at one of these dinners, when Count D'Orsay was expatiating on the evidences that had come before him of the popularity of the Prince in France (although, at that time, the law forbidding any member of the Bonaparte family to enter the country was still in force), the future Emperor sat silent with a significant smile upon his face, the meaning of which none could fail to interpret. On another occasion, when I was alluding to the part played by General Cavaignac in June 1848, in firing upon the people after the *émeute* had been quelled, the Prince drily, but in an earnest manner, remarked, "That man is clearing the way for me."

The Prince President was not one of those men who forget, under present exaltation, friendly relations contracted during less fortunate days. Having on my arrival in Paris inscribed my name at the palace of the Elysée, then the residence of the Prince President, I was on the morrow honoured with an invitation to dinner; and it was natural, in the aforesaid dilemma, that I should try the effect of an appeal to the Prince. My statement was listened to with ready attention. "It is in the interest of art," was the Prince's remark, "that the advent of so great a singer as Madame Sontag should be encouraged;" and orders were immediately issued, through his secretary, Monsieur Auguste Chevalier (brother of the celebrated *publiciste*, Michel Chevalier), that the "Salle du Conservatoire" should be placed at my disposal.

It might have been supposed that all hindrances were now surmounted. But this was far from being the case. Open resistance to the President's order was impossible; but a passive opposition was employed in many influential

quarters to thwart my designs, and thus the definitive solution of the affair was still retarded. It was not only from cabals of the Parisian press—which, it may here be stated, were active even throughout the whole progress of the speculation—and from the intrigues of the "Parti Ronconi" (as the opposition on the part of the management of the Italian Opera was called), that I was fated to suffer. Expedients, great and small, were invented to hinder the production of the Sontag Concerts at the sacred "Salle du Conservatoire." The Director of the "Beaux Arts" entreated me to prefer the little theatre of the Palace of the Tuileries, a proposal which I accepted, but ultimately set aside for "reasons of state."

A more formidable obstacle now appeared in the legal or quasi-legal objection, that no official privilege or concession could be formally made out to me as an alien. My *qualité d'étranger*, I was officially informed, would render such a step illegal. In my fresh dilemma I found a friend in Count Eugéne de Lonlay, who consented to receive the official grant of privilege in his own name. In his name, then, after many other technical flaws had been devised and surmounted, the privilege to make use of the "Salle du Conservatoire" for extraordinary concerts was made out; and to this formal grant the ministerial signature was duly appended.

At length, then, I concluded all was smoothed, and the Salle was mine. Not so; the greater expedients of the opposition had been employed, and they had failed. The minor expedients were put forward, in order to worry me, it would seem, into a renunciation of my purpose. The "concierge" of the establishment, I was informed, was in the habit of receiving his orders only from the Director of the Conservatoire, and the Director himself

declared that *he* had received no official directions to give up the Salle. Again was this objection obviated. The cunning devices were finally reduced to their smallest, almost ludicrous form. The very key of the Salle was not forthcoming; "it was in the possession of another official, and he had no authority to give it up."

Wearied by all this chicanery, and by procrastinations which threatened to overturn my intended speculation, I was obliged, although reluctantly, to make a fresh appeal to the President of the Republic. How successful was this new appeal became evident when, on the following day, Monsieur Chevalier intimated in person to the Director of the "Beaux Arts," that if I were not placed in full possession of the Salle du Conservatoire within forty-eight hours from that time, the Director's own dismissal would be signed by the President. The force of "will" possessed by the new ruler of the country, whenever that will was once clearly and firmly expressed, was already well known in France. Within a few hours from the visit of the President's secretary to the Director, I was in full possession of the coveted Salle.

After all these intrigues, exercised against a foreigner, to thwart his designs, by an artistic clique, the acrimony of which may be proved by the fact that I had the greatest difficulty in collecting an orchestra—it was a gratifying circumstance that the concerts at which Madame Sontag appeared were in every way, professionally as well as financially, eminently successful. The "exclusive" Society of Paris, so well known under its designation of the "Société du Faubourg St. Germain," the society of the old *noblesse* of France and its social and political adherents which, since the Revolution of 1848,

had remained mute and spiritless and had given "no sign of life," seemed to have awakened as from a trance. It had long since foregone all its wonted festivities. It had abstained from even visiting its old arena of fashion and fancied exclusiveness, the Italian Opera, thereby nearly ruining Signor Ronconi. It had wholly slumbered. But it started up at the sound of Madame Sontag's voice as at the blast of a trumpet; and the "beau monde" once more thronged the concert-room to overflowing. All that was most brilliant or fashionably exclusive in Paris, was again to be seen there, when *she* sang. No matter whether the "Society" of Paris was simply excited by curiosity to *see* the Countess, who had descended from her "high estate" into the domain of public art—or was really allured by her charm as an artist, the fact was so. The "Faubourg St. Germain" was resuscitated for the time. Every box and stall at these concerts was tenanted by the finest old names of France, notwithstanding that the President of the hated Republic reserved a box for himself, and (although prevented by state affairs on the first oocasion) appeared among them to hear the gifted and interesting Countess.

During the progress of this series of successful concerts, a supplementary *soirée* had been given at Brussels, where an equally satisfactory result had been obtained. Although some of those difficulties without which no enterprise can be carried on, had occurred also in the Belgian capital, they were not of that obstructive nature which had signalised the Parisian opposition. The same success, the same fashionable and artistic appreciation, welcomed the brilliant Countess at Brussels; and she returned to sing at the remaining concerts of the "Conservatoire," with, if anything, increased *prestige*. The result of this

speculation would have been sufficient to compensate for the short-comings of the previous winter tour, but for the loss of time occasioned by the hostile manœuvres already narrated—of time, during which the payments were continuous, the gains suspended.

Meanwhile, during the prosperous course of Madame Sontag in Paris and Brussels, Her Majesty's Theatre had opened for the season of 1850, on the evening of Tuesday, the 12th March. No distinct or official prospectus had been issued on this occasion. The customary rule had been departed from, amidst the delays and uncertainties of the previous year; and it would seem as though I was justified by strict policy in adopting this novel course. It afforded no ground for the carpings and cavillings of my detractors about "promises unfulfilled," on occasions when I might be unable to meet promises legitimately made, and only thwarted by unforseen circumstances beyond my control. If subscribers objected to taking boxes in their uncertainty as to the prospects of the season, reliance might still be placed on the effect of the attractions eventually produced during the course of the season, upon the public at large, which was more and more becoming the patron of the Opera; and, as it will be seen, in the history of the season of 1850, there was never, perhaps, during my whole management, a period more rich in illustrious artists of every class in the operatic department, or a year in which more effective blows were struck.

Whilst Madame Sontag—whose return to London, as well as that of the other principal artists, was a matter of public notoriety—was yet singing in Paris, I had recourse to Madame Parodi, one of the objects of interest in the previous season. She was to appear as the chief "star"

of the pre-Easter period, and considerable excitement was awakened in musical circles by the announcement that Pasta's favourite pupil would sustain the character of *Medea*, one of the parts of that great singer that were most strongly stamped upon the memory of a former generation of opera-goers. So, with the "Medea" of Mayer, and Mademoiselle Parodi as the enchantress, the theatre once more opened its doors.

That I had been judicious in producing this opera, as a lure to curiosity, was attested by the result. But it never could have been expected to occupy a permanent position on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre. The music of Mayer was of the ante-Rossinian school, and was consequently entitled to the respect of the old opera-goers, who in their early days had looked upon Rossini as a mere tune-maker. But it was not one of the best specimens of the early period of the present century, and it had owed its reputation to the correctness of its cold classicality, and, on the Anglo-Italian stage, to the powerful acting of Pasta. To modern ears it seemed tedious and almost commonplace—at all events, deficient in the dramatic warmth of later composers. The "mantle" of Pasta however, even to the literal acceptation of the word, had descended to her pupil; Parodi's performance created a lively interest, stamped, as it was, with the traditions of the great vocal Siddons of the Italian stage. It was powerful, impressive, and, of its kind, brilliant. The "cast" included Beletti and Calzolari—both sure, steady, and satisfactory singers of another school; Madame Giuliani; and, lastly, a new tenor, Micheli, who made his first appearance as *Giasone*, but failed utterly to obtain a favourable verdict from the critical audience of "Her Majesty's."

"Medea" not being destined to retain any position on the boards of the Haymarket Opera House, "Nino" ("Nabucco") soon took its place, admirably supported by Mademoiselle Parodi, as *Abigail*, to give occasion for the *début* of Signor Lorenzo, a young nobleman whose real name was Montemerli and who was highly recommended by Lord Normanby (at that time our ambassador in Paris), by Prince Poniatowski, himself no ordinary musician, as well as by other illustrious *dilettanti*. He appeared in the part of the maddened king, and was indulgently received. Signor Lorenzo had a tolerable voice, and some dramatic power; but he was not of that excellence which would warrant his being classed with great bass singers, such as Lablache, Coletti, or Beletti.

Far more important was the reappearance of Mr. Sims Reeves on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre. All former differences had been amicably arranged with the management, and he came again to assert his true position as one of the best of European tenors. His task was a severe one. He had still to contend with the ill-judged fastidiousness and one-sided prejudice of a class of opera-goers who will never allow any singer, whatever his merits, to be great in his own country. But Reeves accomplished his task with admirable artistic skill, and won his golden spurs in the battle with prejudice in the part of *Ernani*. His whole performance, dramatic as well as vocal, was one of eminent merit in the opinion of all unbiassed hearers. Parodi was the *Elvira* of the evening.

A new ballet, "Les Métamorphoses," on a subject of German "diablerie," had been brought out on the opening night of the season, with Carlotta Grisi, who obtained in it a great amount of favour; and Mademoi-

selle Ferraris, since become so great a favourite on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre, made her *début* in an occasional *divertissement*, establishing her reputation "at one bound." As a *ballerina di forza*, Mademoiselle Ferraris was remarkable for her grace and rapidity of execution. Variety and interest had thus their full share in the bill of fare of the opening weeks of the season of 1850.

The theatre reopened for its main season with "Lucia di Lammermoor" for the *début* of Miss Catherine Hayes, an English vocalist of great and well-deserved celebrity. With Sims Reeves in the part of *Edgardo*, the supporters of "native talent," who formed a small popular party of their own in opposition to its detractors at all ventures, had here an opportunity of greeting two native singers at the same time, on the same boards, in Italian Opera; and certainly must have enjoyed a well-won triumph for their cause. The *débutante* was received with great favour, and with her feminine grace, her tender and refined style, and interesting appearance, enlisted the general approbation of the cognoscenti.

The principal star of the season, Madame Sontag, next appeared, inspired by her Parisian honours, in Donizetti's "Don Pasquale," accompanied by the ever welcome ever great Lablache, together with Calzolari and Beletti. Each shining nightly in popular favour, they composed a charming constellation in this gay little opera. Madame Sontag was received on her *rentrée* as only Jenny Lind had been received of late years. The London audience not only acknowledged its own gratification for the past in this reception, but its sense also of the triumph in the French capital. She appeared as fresh, young, and girlish in her buoyancy as ever.

The magic effects of the "fontaine de jouvence," that enviable marvel, seemed still upon her. In brilliancy of execution, in delicacy and taste, she even appeared to have gained somewhat by her fresh experiences. *Norina* was allowed to be one of her most charming characters. "Il Barbiere," and "Don Giovanni," in which Madame Sontag was an exquisite *Zerlina*, followed; and the restored *cantatrice* seemed to rise in popular enthusiasm, higher perhaps than in the days of her more youthful triumphs. "Le Nozze di Figaro" was perhaps less effective than had been the revivals of other masterpieces of Rossini and Mozart. In spite of the quiet charm of Madame Sontag's *Susanna*, there was an evident unfitness of Mademoiselle Parodi for the part of the *Contessa*, as well as of Miss Catherine Hayes for that of *Cherubino*. The latter part requires a contralto, not a soprano; and this *chef d'œuvre* accordingly flagged, in comparison with those operas which had preceded it. Nor was Coletti, who had been already welcomed back to his post as an old favourite, seen or heard to his customary advantage as the *Count*. In the "Lombardi," and more especially in the "Due Foscari," which he sang with Madame Giuliani and Mademoiselle Parodi, he received higher honours.

The "Lombardi" of Verdi, never a very popular opera in England, was revived for the first appearance of a new tenor. The public had been so greatly disappointed for some time past in the "great" tenors who had lately appeared (though lavishly decked with Italian laurels), that but little sensation was created by the announcement of the *début* of "again a new tenor" in Signor Baucarde. On the contrary, an expectation

of fresh disappointment hung over the minds of all.

Under these circumstances, Baucarde may be said to have taken the town by surprise. According to a current story, young Baucarde had been originally employed in the palace kitchen of the Grand Duke of Tuscany; and, like the celebrated composer Lully, he first attracted the attention of his superiors by his talents for cookery. His manifest vocal advantages caused him to be placed in a position to acquire a sound musical education, and thus to become one of the most agreeable tenors of his time.

Nothing was expected, yet great results were achieved. With a charmingly sweet, but still robust voice of wonderful extension; with a style wherein the use of the falsetto was at once sparingly and judiciously employed, this young artist won easily upon a public accustomed to give a preference to natural gifts over the display of skill. Not that Baucarde was deficient in skill; on the contrary, his "school" was excellent. As an actor he rose scarcely above mediocrity, but any deficiency in this respect was overlooked in the splendour of his "organ."

In the "Due Foscari," and in a lesser degree, perhaps, in the "Puritani" (in which Madame Sontag appeared for the first time), Signor Baucarde continued to win upon the audience. In "Lucrezia Borgia" he had to contend with illustrious recollections; so that his success in "Gennaro," in which his deficiencies as an actor were more easily discernible than in other parts, was somewhat dimmed by the memories of supeior excellence. Lablache's opinion of Baucarde was thus expressed in a letter:—"Baucarde è un giovine di buon aspetto, e se studierà, diverrà un tenore di prima sfera. Piace

generalmente, benché abbia bisogna di perfezzionare la sua mimica."

In "Lucrezia Borgia," Madame Frezzolini made her reappearance before the subscribers. Her first *début* had not produced any great effect. She now appeared with revived powers and the added *éclat* of her great reputation in Italy, and that obtained, more lately, in Russia.

That her success was great is undoubted, in this opera as well as in the "Elisir d'Amore;" but although received with decided favour, this excellent artiste never acquired that position in the eyes of a London audience which she certainly merited; all the more disappointing as the pretensions of the lady were enormous, and the diplomacy needed to secure her unusually difficult. Moreover, one of the great events of the season of 1850 was at hand, absorbing all the interest of curiosity and expectation.

The new opera of the "Tempesta," based upon "The Tempest" of Shakspeare, with a *libretto* arranged and written by Monsieur Scribe, and music by Halévy, was about to be performed. A new opera, "never given upon any stage" and first to be sung at Her Majesty's Theatre, was in itself a fact sufficiently important to rouse curiosity and excitement in all musical circles. But coming heralded by high-sounding names curiosity rose many degrees higher. The "first night" pre-occupied the attention of opera-goers to the detriment of all other attractions, and expectation under those circumstances amounted to feverish impatience.

The previous history of this libretto, originally offered to the celebrated Mendelssohn, first kept in abeyance on account of the difference of opinion between the com-

poser and *librettist* with regard to certain "situations," and finally entirely laid aside upon the death of the illustrious composer, has already been given. Of all modern musicians, no one had been so well fitted for the task of clothing the ideas of Shakspeare with appropriate music as the immortal composer of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." But the original spirit was hushed, and, under the circumstances, no other composer could probably have been found to undertake the task of treading upon the hallowed ground of Shakspeare's poem with more reverence than Monsieur Halévy. In all he undertook he was earnest and zealous. If not so thoroughly imbued with that spirit of poetry which pervaded the works of the great Mendelssohn, he had, at all events, a deep feeling of "devotion" (if so it may be called), which gave him strength and power. Although somewhat hurried by the necessary demands of the management, Monsieur Halévy had accomplished the task set before him with a truthful and earnest spirit. That the subject of Shakspeare's "Tempest" was eminently fitted for music, few will be found to contest; moreover it seems probable that this play was the first which, in the Elizabethan age, assumed in some degree the form of an opera, richly interspersed as it was with pieces to be sung. The play has been revived at different epochs since the days of Shakspeare, and in different shapes, but almost invariably, till within a late period, in an operatic form, with music by different composers. That of Purcell and Arne has come down "fresh as ever" to our days. The operatic spirit of the play has, in very late years, also inspired one of the best rising composers of the present time, Mr. Sullivan, with some charming melo-

dies. Nevertheless this great work of Shakspeare, partaking in a considerable degree rather of the nature of a dramatic poem than of an actual opera, lacked (be it said with all reverence) the stage "situations" rendered necessary to lyrical works by modern requirements. These "situations," Monsieur Scribe, fertile in invention and skilled in dramatic expedients, had laboured to supply. His task was not grateful, however executed; it was sure to be assailed by the "Purist" lovers of Shakspeare, as being an audacious inroad upon the conceptions of the mighty poet.

It has been seen that this "audacity" had met no congenial response from Mendelssohn. That Monsieur Scribe, by placing in the foreground the insane love of *Caliban* for *Miranda*; by inventing the power of the magic flowers, placed in the hands of *Caliban* by his imprisoned mother *Sycorax*, to work her spells upon her enemies; by introducing the carrying off of *Miranda* by the monster, and by other devices, had furnished certain *dramatic* situations to meet what he considered the demands of modern opera, and afford the composer striking points for music, is indubitable. But it is equally indubitable that he thus laid himself open to severe criticism, especially in the scene where *Miranda*, deluded by the warning voice of *Sycorax*, is about to attempt the life of the sleeping *Ferdinand*, as her father's worst and most dangerous enemy. Apart from the reverent feeling for the master-mind of Shakspeare (if that reverence *could* be waived when the mighty name entered so powerfully into the *prestige* of the whole production), Monsieur Scribe had concocted a striking and fascinating *libretto* of supernatural *féerie*.

The "cast" announced was of grand promise. Sontag

figured as *Miranda*, Lablache as *Caliban*, Coletti as *Prospero*, Baucarde as *Ferdinand*, *Trinculo* and *Stephano* fell to the lot of Ferraris and Mademoiselle Parodi. The conspiring Princes were represented by Lorenzo and Federico Lablache. *Sycorax* and *The Spirit of the Air* (although very minor parts), were to be sung by Ida Bertrand, the contralto of the season, and Madame Giuliani; whilst the "dainty spirit *Ariel*" was to be embodied by Carlotta Grisi. It would be difficult to conceive a "cast" of greater power or of greater promise, to imagine how the excitement on the subject of the new opera could be otherwise than intense in musical circles. To increase the importance of the event, both Monsieur Halévy and Monsieur Scribe arrived in London in order to superintend the last rehearsels of their work, and were received on all occasions with the homage due to their names.*

On Saturday the 8th July, the long-expected "Tempest" was produced before an over-flowing audience. The success of the work on the first night was "tremendous." Never, perhaps, had any new opera been received with such frenzied acclamation. The opera, there is no doubt, abounded in striking and captivating

*All London seemed of one mind to offer every tribute of respect to the illustrious Frenchmen. The great opened their houses to them. Clubs did them honour. Literary societies offered them festive entertainments. Every facility was afforded them by the "Powers that be." This general enthusiasm was the best evidence of a national desire to express a generous *entente cordiale* on our side of the water. I celebrated the arrival of these coadjutors by a grand dinner, at which the Duke of Leinster, Baron Brunow the Russian Ambassador, Monsieur Van der Weyer the Belgian minister, and other personages of rank and note were present.

morceaux, and had been composed with earnestness and power. Of melody, there was a rich store, although the ever popular air, by Dr. Arne, "Where the bee sucks," judiciously employed by the composer for the pantomimic music of his *Ariel*, and as the finale of the opera, stood out amidst all its modern companions with a delicious freshness.

After the performance, Monsieur Halévy, while on the stage, was overwhelmed with congratulations. All the foreign artists were warm in their expressions of delight. One after the other they approached him to say, "How beautiful! How charming! How exquisite is this *motivo!*" Each hummed a melody. The melody was invariably the same. It was that of Arne. Poor Monsieur Halévy must have winced under it, even in the midst of his glory. Moreover, there was a drawback in the *decrescendo* nature of the composition. Each of the three main acts of the opera (the tempest at sea having formed a prologue) was less effective (even though good in itself) than the preceding one. Nevertheless, the opera was received with a species of wild enthusiasm. Artists, composer, author, conductor, and finally the manager, were one and all called and recalled to receive the overwhelming plaudits of the crowded house.

The singing of all employed on the occasion was "first-rate." Madame Sontag won herself fresh laurels, and made the part of *Miranda* one of the very best. But, in the midst of all that was excellent, Lablache stood out in popular estimation as *the* striking impersonation of the character of *Caliban*. It was the last, as it was the best "creation" of this rare artist. The music as well as the acting taxed to the utmost the powers of one already on the wane. But he rose

superior to every difficulty. His *Caliban* was not only adjudged to be the finest delineation of the character known, even amidst the many great actors who had figured in this extraordinary part upon the English stage, but was hailed as one of the "finest creations" ever seen! All was novel—all was artistic in this wonderful personation. His "dull earthiness" and "brute ferocity," his expression of animal love for *Miranda*, his savage exultation under the influence of wine, and his grovelling, but still revengeful despair, combined to form a masterpiece, and raised Lablache—if anything could raise him—to a loftier pinnacle of fame than before. Scarcely less striking was the *Ariel* of Carlotta Grisi, who exhibited more "mind" as well as more poetry of expression in this, than in any previous choreographic effort. Coletti, Baucarde, and Mademoiselle Parodi (in the spirited little part of the sailor *Stephano*, as it stood in operatic form), all came in for the crumbs which fell from the rich harvest of acclamation so lavishly bestowed upon the above-mentioned artists. It is due to the management, at the same time, to say, that all the scenic illustrations of the "faëry" opera were fraught with a magnificence and a poetic feeling previously unknown. The contrivance of the vessel wrecking in the storm of the prologue, the landscapes of the "Enchanted Island," and the gorgeous display of spirit power in the concluding *tableau*, surpassed all yet exhibited on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre.

The performance of Lablache in *Caliban*, became, as might have been expected, the "town talk," and contributed very materially to the great success of the "Tempesta," which ran on its triumphant course every night for some weeks to crowded houses, and with

undiminished excitement. During this brilliant period, I gave, at the "Chancellors," one of those "delightful *fêtes*," which, as has been said, were always among the leading features of a London season. On this occasion the tribute was principally paid to the "heroes of the day," Monsieur Halévy and Monsieur Scribe. These gentlemen were invited to receive a national welcome, as it were, from persons bearing rank either in the social hierarchy or in the domain of art and literature; of which classes a goodly array was assembled on the 19th of June, 1850, in my villa and grounds, to do honour to the foreign "celebrities."

About this time the Nepaulese Prince was one of the frequenters of Her Majesty's Theatre. I recollect he told me, on the occasion of his visit, that he did not know how "to sit still," so much was he struck with the brilliancy on both sides. Although educated not to express surprise, he could not conceal his feelings.

It was necessary, however, in spite of the great success of the "Tempesta," to provide employment for the other artists of the establishment, and to give some repose to those whose powers had been so long and so arduously taxed. The first change was made by the revival of the "Montecchi e Capuletti" of Bellini, for Madame Frezzolini as *Giulietta*, and Mademoiselle Parodi as *Romeo*. So many years had passed since Bellini's version of "Romeo and Juliet" had appeared on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre, that it was received with a certain amount of curiosity, not to say as a novelty. Pleasing as are Bellini's melodies throughout

this opera, its disjointed and unsatisfactory *libretto* had always caused it to fail of securing a hearty welcome in a theatre where Shakspeare was involuntarily more or less in men's thoughts. But the combined attraction of Frezzolini and Parodi, both of whom were admirably "suited" in this opera, carried it through with very considerable *éclat*. The same occasion was used for the reappearance of Gardoni (the fourth successful *primo tenore* in my abundant list for the season), in the somewhat unsatisfactory part of *Tebaldo*; when this popular favourite was welcomed back with more than usual cordiality. Some of the enthusiasm demonstrated upon this occasion was due to a false report which had been spread about and had appeared in the public prints, respecting the death of this accomplished young tenor at St. Petersburg, where he had a winter engagement. The intelligence had been frequently given as authentic, although Gardoni had never had a moment's illness.

A surprise now awaited the frequenters of Her Majesty's Theatre—a surprise, suggesting to some persons feelings of apprehension rather than of pleasurable emotion—to others a subject fraught with curiosity. Madame Pasta was in London—the great and far-famed Pasta—the Pasta who had been the glory and pride of an earlier generation of opera-goers. She was here on a visit to her young friend and pupil, Mademoiselle Parodi—the child of her affection and of future hopes. Would the illustrious *prima donna* (it was urged) once more appear upon those boards where in earlier days she had won so many triumphs? Doubtless the great artist hesitated. It is to be hoped she was unwilling to mar the fair structure

of fame she had built up for herself, by publicly exhibiting the waste and ruin which time had unquestionably wrought. But whatever the motive which induced her to give way to solicitations, she yielded to the desire of appearing once more upon the scene of her past and still unforgotten glories. A preliminary concert was given in the music-room of the establishment, before a select rather than numerous audience. Old admirers were there, who still recollected Madame Pasta when she was the greatest ornament of the lyric stage; younger *dilettanti* of the day assembled to catch the last rays of a genius which had once filled all Europe with its splendour. The former sought the memory of days gone by; the latter came to pay deference to the verdict of a previous generation. All listened with respect, liberally applauded the remains of past greatness, and kindly "dreamed the rest." Madame was hailed with the tribute due to her name and fame. She was done homage to as a queen by the circle around her: but the *artist* was, confessedly, a wreck. The fine qualities were still there, like the perfume of the spirit in the broken vase; the noble phrasing, the grandeur of expression, the classic severity of taste in the choice and use of ornament. But the voice, always thick and husky even in its prime, had lost all its volume and all command over correct intonation. As a relic of a proud monument of former days, she was contemplated with veneration; but no memory of the past could gild the ruin so as to veil its desolation.

A still severer trial attended the illustrious *prima donna* on the boards of the theatre. On Thursday the 11th of July she appeared (now "for the last time on any stage") in a selection of "scenes" from "Anna

Bolena." The part of the afflicted queen had been one of the greatest among her characters. Curiosity had been stimulated to a very powerful degree, and the house was crowded in every part. Madame Pasta appeared, to be hailed with prolonged acclamations. There she stood once more, on the scene of her past glories, "every inch a Queen." The spectacle was deeply interesting; yet it was melancholy, not to say painful, to all who could feel with true artistic sympathy. With the noble presence and the lofty air of the Pasta of old days, she moved like a mighty shadow of the past before the eyes of the spectators; but it was the "shadow of a shade." The qualities already mentioned—the faultless style, the finished phrasing, the grand declamation, were all greeted with something more than respect, whilst the imaginative among the audience may have figured to themselves, like clever geologists, out of the shattered remains of the great vocal Mammoth, a perfect creature of former times. But the general sentiment was one of disappointment and regret. "Is this all that remains of so wonderful a past?" was the regretful exclamation of the young. "It had been better that our hopeful recollection had never been disturbed and dimmed by so sad a ghost," thought the old. The "longing, lingering look behind" had literally been taken by the great *prima donna*. That she damaged her great fame by taking it, cannot be said. Her "last appearance" was soon forgotten in the turmoil of operatic events; whilst her name still gleams with traditional lustre in the annals of lyric fame.

Well do I recollect a visit I myself paid to the great Pasta at her residence on the lake of Como, where her pupil Parodi was also living. The primitive simplicity of

life adopted by one who had formerly commanded the applause of Europe, was indeed surprising. On one occasion, when rowing in a boat upon the lake, Parodi sang "Addio Teresa," in which I at once recognised the origin of "Trema Bizantio" in *Belisario*.

My next venture in the way of novelty was certainly not of so "legitimate" a nature, although a justification of the policy of producing any kind of excellence to stimulate curiosity is easily furnished. The appearance of a negress singer had long been announced. In Paris, under the name of the "Black Malibran," this "lady of colour" had certainly excited a considerable sensation. M. Theophile Gautier, who wrote to me respecting this interesting personage, thought she would suit England: "Elle a surtout ce qui plait en Angleterre, l'excentricité, la nouveauté, et l'originalité." But Gautier here only expresses the ordinary French *point de vue*.

Her biography, excellently written, and introduced in a treatise upon the songs of the Isle of Cuba and negro melodies in general, had been published and disseminated. Donna Maria Martinez, the "Black Malibran," it was generally made known, was the child of freed negroes, had been carefully brought up and well instructed in a Spanish house, and early grounded in musical science. Wedded to a Spanish sea captain (not a "gentleman of colour" it may be presumed), she had suffered reverses of fortune, and had made her musical attainments available by public singing. The "Black Malibran" figured in a new *divertissement*, entitled "Les Delices du Sérail," as "a wandering minstrel," singing to the Sul-

tana. Her Cuban, and more exclusively Spanish melodies, were full of original charm. She accompanied herself upon the guitar, of the powers of which she was evidently a mistress. Her execution was excellent; her spirit and animation were undeniable; her voice was sweet, pure, and true, although too weak for the vast arena of her Majesty's Theatre. She was vehemently applauded and encouraged. But the whole performance was "small," almost to meagreness; and although it might well be regarded as a piquant musical curiosity, it failed in any real power of attraction. This black phantom flitted briefly over the stage, to disappear for ever, as a far more illustrious "shade" had recently done before her.

It must not be supposed that the great *prima-donna* of the season had been merged below the surface in this inundation of unexpected novelty. The "Tempesta" was still to be found "upon the hills," and on the night of the 18th of July, Madame Rossi Sontag appeared for the first time in the "Figlia del Reggimento." Perhaps during her whole career at Her Majesty's Theatre, since her return to the stage, Madame Sontag had never undertaken a more hazardous part. The "Figlia" was so identified in the public mind with Jenny Lind, that it was impossible for Madame Sontag to escape comparisons on the part of a public which always *will* insist, against all the rules of true judgment, in making them. The Anglo-Italian stage had known no "Figlia" but its own cherished and petted daughter of adoption. The town still swarmed with coloured engravings and statuettes of its beloved "Child of the Regiment." But from this ordeal Madame Sontag came forth with credit. Her exquisite grace and the perfection

of her singing nobody questioned. But it was as the consummate actress, full of imaginative detail, and inventive bye-play, that she shone forth conspicuously. The public found that instead of one "daughter," it now had two, and in spite of strong impressions of "first love," could hardly decide which of the two it now loved the best. Again, in a portion of the "Semiramide," given for the lady's benefit night, Madame Sontag, although not generally looked upon as an exponent of the "opera seria," and subjected as before to trying comparisons, once more obtained the suffrages of her audience. In all she shone, although surrounded by other luminaries, as *the* "star" of Her Majesty's Theatre.

Another event of the season of 1850—a season already so prolific in unexpected appearances—was the *début* of Madame Fiorentini as *Norma*. This lady, a Spaniard by birth, and the wife of an English officer, had already obtained reputation in Berlin. She appeared with singular advantages—a fine, full, mellow voice, and remarkable personal beauty. With these decidedly "sensuous" aids, she carried all before her on a first night, in spite of an obvious deficiency in flexibility when attempting florid execution, and the absence of self-command as an actress. In the opinion of those in whom her captivating and obvious natural gifts did not outweigh the judgment, she had yet much to learn. Again she appeared as *Donna Anna*, in "Don Giovanni." Perhaps in the music of Mozart, and by the side of the exquisite German "school" displayed by Madame Sontag, she was heard (there was no question about the "seen") to still less advantage. Still the public was not to be talked out of its "first night" enthusiasm, and the season of 1850 may be said

to have closed, leaving to Madame Fiorentini a full measure of triumph. In public estimation she had been eminently successful: in the judgment of the "connoisseur," it was at least "promising," if nothing more.

The success of the various new works produced during the season, and more especially the long "run" of the "Tempesta," had prevented the production of other novelties contemplated. The "Prigione d'Edimborgo" of Ricci was once more laid aside. The "Domino Noir" of Auber, for Madame Sontag, was placed on the shelf —indeed, it was not wanted; and the "Enfant Prodigue," also of Auber, was necessarily postponed to the following season. The strongest example of the proverbial "slip betwixt cup and lip" (which, probably, has greater force in operatic and dramatic arrangements than in all other mundane matters), was afforded in the non-production of Lortzing's highly popular German opera of "Czar und Zimmermann," the principal character of which had been intended for Lablache. A long and serious correspondence between the management and Herr Lortzing, had led to the almost immediate "mounting" of this amusing *opera buffa*. But Lablache was already embarked in the new and arduous character of *Caliban*, a part requiring all the energies of his mind in previous study—all the energies of his physical strength in subsequent execution. Thus the "Burgomaestro di Saardam," of Lortznig, had to share the fate of its many melodious companions.

Although Jenny Lind had passed away for ever from the stage of Her Majesty's Theatre, yet her name was still so strongly connected with the pleasantest memories

of its fortunes, that, in a history of its management, a mention of her voyage to America must needs find a place in it. "Farmed" by the well-known speculator Barnum, and accompanied by Mr. Benedict and Signor Beletti, she sailed (in the autumn of 1850) for the United States, to win enthusiastic plaudits and ample remuneration, in each of which tributes to her great talents our trans-Atlantic brethren seemed resolved to equal, if not to out-do, the "Britishers."

During this year, a series of "Grand National Concerts" was given within the time-honoured walls of Her Majesty's Theatre. This enterprise, conducted by an association of noblemen and gentlemen already connected with the "artist world," and carried on with vigour, with Mr. Balfe as conductor, first-rate artists as executants, and an admirable chorus, seemed destined to achieve great things. Yet never was failure more signal. Whence the cause of this disastrous result never was clearly ascertained. May it not have simply been a case of "the broth spoiled" by "too many cooks"?

In the midst of all the anxieties and enormous press of business consequent upon the administration of so vast an establishment, my mind had been greatly occupied by the measures necessary for the realisation of the very important project to which a brief reference has already been made. I was anxious to combine in one grasp the direction of the Italian Opera in Paris with that of Her Majesty's Theatre in London. Early in the year 1849, my attention had been fixed upon this scheme; and my greatest ambition now was to unite the two theatres under my own management. In latter seasons, the "Italiens" (to adopt the familiar Parisian phrase) had been in the hands of Ronconi. But the enterprise

flagged, and was evidently about to fail utterly under his management. Indeed, the pretensions of Madame Ronconi, an inferior and unpopular artist, which had been already disastrously put forward in London, rendered any able conduct of the establishment simply impossible in the hands of a compliant husband. The reins, which were evidently dropping from Ronconi's incompetent hands, I hoped to seize, and then to conduct the chariot to a more creditable goal. My fame as an administrator, I may take leave to say, was spread far and wide. Among other theatres, the Italian Opera at Lisbon had been offered to me, through the intermediation of the English Resident Minister, and on highly advantageous terms. But my hopes, like my ambition, were fixed upon the nobler prize. Through the assistance of an eminent diplomatic friend, ever kind and effective, I had already contrived to "feel my ground" among many most influential personages in the French capital.

During the season of 1850, I crept nearer and nearer to the object of my hopes. As was to be expected, intrigues, hostilities, mischances of every kind were opposed to my endeavour. It has been seen how great were the obstacles thrown in the way of a foreigner in a matter of such minor consideration as the grant of the "Salle du Conservatoire" for a simple series of concerts; and it may be imagined how much more dexterously obstacles would be raised against my designs when this same "foreigner" was soliciting the concession of one of the greatest theatrical establishments in Paris. But pending all these intrigues the President of the Republic again stood my friend. Private messages were despatched—through the British Embassy in Paris—informing me of the best steps to be taken on the occasion;

and to the kind and active assistance of the Prince I was finally indebted for the *privilége* of the Italian Opera in Paris. Whether the victory thus gained was to prove an important advantage, or a delusive gift of fortune, was yet to be decided by the subsequent course of events.

At last the formal "concession" of the Parisian Italian Opera was in my hands. Like all similar concessions, under the regulations then existing in France, it was hampered with conditions of a most onerous nature. Deposits of large sums were at once required as a *cautionnement*, and as a guarantee of the dues to be paid to Government. A formal list of the pieces to be represented, and of the artists to be engaged during the season, was demanded. Even these preliminary arrangements were to be submitted to the Minister of the Interior. A formidable catalogue of official personages having a right to boxes on every night, and free entrances upon every occasion—an official "free list" (as the phrase would have run in English) of such pretensions that it seemed to stretch "to the crack of doom,"—was rendered imperative upon the new director of the establishment. Again a strict official *surveillance* was to be exercised in almost every department. The management of a theatre is still less "a bed of roses" in Paris than elsewhere. Yet more exorbitant than the pretensions of the officials were those of persons who could in any way, or on any "peg" of privilege, hang up a claim to gratuitous *entrées*. Scarcely was it bruited abroad that my efforts had been crowned with success, and that I might now be accosted as "*Monsieur le Directeur du Théâtre de l'Opéra Italien à Paris*," than I was stifled beneath a very avalanche of applications

for favours to the writers or their *protégés*. Artists of every kind were recommended, not only by persons of the highest influence, but by mere "nobodies." Places were demanded in the administration of the *service intérieur*. Advice was hurled at my unfortunate head, including even remonstrances against what *might* possibly be in contemplation!

Another impediment, peculiar to the position of the Italian Opera at Paris, met me on the very threshold of my enterprise. The authors in France have the legal right to demand their share of the profits of every representation of every opera derived from their works, and even (at will) to prevent any representation whatsoever of such pieces. Negotiations consequently had to be opened, respectively, for permission to perform several most important operas; for I had in my contemplated *répertoire*, "La Fille du Regiment," "Ernani," "Lucrezia Borgia," "Rigoletto," "Le Roi S'amuse," and many other lyrical works, all derived from French sources.

With Messrs. Bayard and St. Georges, the authors of the first-named piece, I had little difficulty; but with Monsieur Victor Hugo the case was different. He refused to give his assent altogether to the performance of "Lucrezia Borgia," which I was desirous of making an especial feature. The music had been given, it is true, with another story and other words; but in this shape it had always failed of producing any effect in Paris. My first diplomatic negotiation with the great poet was a personal one, but Monsieur Victor Hugo was positive in his refusal, and, when hard pressed, gave as a reason that a performance of his piece in Italian would be detrimental to the appearance of Mademoiselle Rachel

in the principal part at the Théâtre Français. My next visit was to the great actress, with whom I had always been on the most friendly terms, when Mademoiselle Rachel most positively assured me, that it was never her intention to play the part of *Lucrezia*. At my suggestion she consented to see Monsieur Victor Hugo on the subject; rang the bell, ordered her carriage at once, and started forthwith to seek an interview with the dramatist. In about an hour's time she returned, bringing the author's written consent in her hand. In the meanwhile, however, an application by letter had been made by Madame de Girardin (Delphine Gay, the authoress), at the instance of Prince Poniatowski, to the celebrated *tragédienne*, to perform this very service. Mademoiselle Rachel immediately sent word that the "game was already won." To this letter the authoress responded by an effusion of thanks, expressive of admiration at the promptitude and success of the ambassadress, ending with the declaration that Mademoiselle Rachel must be even a greater "enchantress" than she already knew her to be.

The consent given by the author was framed with singular precision. Six representations of "Lucrezia Borgia" alone were to be granted; and these were expressly to take place in the months of October, November, and December. As a compensation, the author was to receive for each representation of the adaptation of his work, "ten per cent upon the gross receipts of each evening!" A postscript permitted three representations of "Ernani" on the same terms.

As some compensation for the unusual difficulties attending the management of the Italian Opera in Paris, I could not but feel flattered by the kindness, hos-

pitality, and distinction with which I was received by some of the most influential personages in Paris. A welcome guest at the "Elysées," the residence of the Prince President, and hospitably received by Lord and Lady Normanby, who opened to me the doors of the English Embassy, I found the Parisian society of the day all ready to hold out a cordial hand. Invitations to Ministerial *soirées* awaited me. The future Imperialists "followed suit" in attentions. M. De Persigny, ever impulsive in his measures, and M. De Morny, whose interest in dramatic affairs was always intense, did all they could to forward my views. The Rothschilds, Foulds, Baroches, opened their houses. Literary men were forward in their expressions of esteem. By my new venture, it will be seen that I was launched upon the stream of Parisian life under most pleasant and (as I then hoped) happy auspices.

CHAPTER XX.

The Great Exhibition in Hyde Park—Preparations for the Entertainment of "All Nations" by the Opera Management—Opening of the Theatre with Caroline Duprez—Her Reception—Production of "Gustavus III."—The "Muta di Portici," with Mdlle. Monti—Her Talent as a Mime—*Rentrée* of Madame Sontag—"Gala" Representation, to celebrate the Opening of the Exhibition—"Le Tre Nozze" of Alary "mounted"—Its Success—Don Giovanni—Sims Reeves—Return of Sophie Cruvelli—"Fidelio" brought out for the first Time at Her Majesty's Theatre—Obliging Conduct of the leading Singers in assisting to give Effect to the "Chorus of Prisoners"—The Opera very successful—The "Enfant Prodigue" of Auber, strongly cast—Madame Ugalde—Production of "Florinda" by M. Thalberg—Its Effect diminished by the Dullness of the "Libretto"—State Visit of the Queen to "The Old House"—Barbieri-Nini—Balfe's Opera—Fête at My Villa.

THE year 1851, which now dawned, was the first "Great Exhibition" year in London. All the world had been invited to a great industrial and social congress in England. The busy hum of preparation in honour of the invitation was heard in all countries. When the world was to send guests, but one thought occupied men's minds in England—viz., how best to do them honour. In this thought I was not behind the nation. When it seemed likely that the influx of sight-seeing visitors to the English metropolis, including British and Irish as well as foreign guests, would be enormous, beyond any known precedent in London's history, it would

have been easy for the director of Her Majesty's Theatre to rely upon his "stock" company, and his ample *répertoire* of "stock operas," as sufficiently attractive for the gathering multitudes, to many of whom the performances would have appeared fresh and new; more especially would the "common language" of music have led foreigners, in quest of recreation, to the lyrical theatres. But far from "resting on my oars," in the assurance that operatic calculation must prove successful at all ventures, I felt animated by more than usual ambition to secure a pre-eminence for the establishment over which I presided, and which had so long been renowned for both lyrical and choreographic glories. "My soul was stirred within me;" and if the arrangements made for the season of 1851 could not by any human exertions greatly *excel* those of some past years, they certainly equalled in brilliancy and *variety* any which had been presented to London during the whole career of my management. "I set my house in order," for the reception not of London alone, but of "all the world." Nor would it be using hyperbole to say that, as far as operatic events were concerned, the "eyes of Europe were upon me."*

Returning to ancient custom, I once more published a formal, official prospectus of the engagements and coming events of the season. General approval greeted this return to the old observance, which had for once been suspended in 1850.

The *programme* was rich in great names. In addi-

* In addition to the proposal mentioned in the last chapter, to accept the management of the great operatic theatre at Lisbon, I had been entreated, early in the year 1851, by the governmental and municipal authorities of Milan, to become the director of the great theatre of La Scala, in that city.

tion to Madame Sontag, now the reigning queen of the operatic stage, Mademoiselle Alboni, Mademoiselle Parodi, Madame Fiorentini, Madame Giuliani, and other *cantatrici* of note, were now promised Mademoiselle Caroline Duprez, the daughter of the celebrated tenor, who had latterly achieved great success in Paris, and Madame Barbieri-Nini. In addition, likewise, to the names already established in popular favour, of Gardoni, Sims Reeves, Calzolari, and Lablache, those of Scotti, a new tenor, and Ferranti, were announced. Beletti, one of the most admired bass singers of the time, had sailed for New York with Jenny Lind, his firm friend and supporter. The *ballet* comprised the *élite* of the wonted favourites in Carlotta Grisi, Rosati, Ferraris, Marie Taglioni, and Petit-Stephan, under the auspices of the able ballet-master, Monsieur Paul Taglioni.

It was altogether under pleasant auguries that Her Majesty's Theatre opened on Saturday, 22nd March. "Lucia di Lammermoor" was given, with Mademoiselle Caroline Duprez as the *Lucia* of the night. The widely-spread and deserved celebrity of her father, Monsieur Duprez, the great tenor of the Académie ex-Royale of Paris, had attached an unwonted interest to the *début* of his daughter. He was known to be not only a great singer, but a profound and accomplished musician. That all his skill and attention would be employed when instructing his darling child in her art was certain. The young lady herself had made her "first appearance on any stage" in Paris, under my own auspices, with very great success. Everything combined to throw an unusual "halo" around the principal "star" of the opening night.

Without this amount of *prestige*, there is little doubt

that the performance of Mademoiselle Duprez would have excited the enthusiasm which really was displayed. Her extreme youth and attractive person would have disarmed any rigid criticism on the part of the public. But she needed no indulgence, and might fairly be judged according to her own undeniable merits—viz., exquisite style and finish. Her performance, as an actress, offered the charm of maidenly simplicity. Mademoiselle Duprez was not the great tragic heroine torn by conflicting passions; she was the shrinking, timid girl, driven by the very suppression of her feelings into madness. If she displayed no especial power, she was, on the other hand, allowed to be more nearly akin, in manner and feeling, to the original conception of the great master of romance than any of her predecessors. Her voice was clear though not full, indicating premature fatigue, the consequence of her exertions as a vocal *prima donna* at the "Grand Opera." The only drawback to an otherwise excellent performance was a feeling prevalent among her approving hearers, that her physical capabilities were overtaxed. But this the father never felt, as his heart filled and his eyes overflowed with the legitimate pride which his daughter's first and favourable venture before a London audience excited within him.

The opening night of the season of 1851 was further signalized by the production of a new *ballet*, "L'Isle des Amours," for the reappearance of Mademoiselle Ferraris, whose *début* in the previous season had added another accomplished and admired *danseuse* to my already strong list. This new choreographic display was emphatically termed a "Watteau-Ballet," and was daintily decked out with all the costumes and accessories

of the ideal world of hooped and beribanded shepherds and shepherdesses, and bewigged and bespangled denizens of an impossible court, copied from the works of the charming painter of festal romance. Animated groups of mortals and immortals appeared in porcelain *tableaux*. There was a peculiar grace and captivation about this embodiment of an artist's whimsical fancies, well fitted to command success, although its varying "tableaux" were threaded, like old-fashioned gems, upon the string of a very slender plot. In obedience to the prevalent fashion, it was the habit of *maîtres de ballet*, about this time, to give their compositions as little plot as possible for listless brains to unravel, instead of taxing their own in the invention or arrangement of some story of interest, such as might serve to display the mimic powers of the artists, and merit the name of a *ballet d'action*. Mademoiselle Ferraris, already so favourably received, fully established herself as a London favourite, as well by her grace and charm of manner, as by her extraordinary force and precision of mechanical execution.

The first of my long list of novelties produced in this *Annus Mirabilis* was the "Gustave III." of Auber. A version of this melodious and popular opera, it is true, had been given, very many years previously, in an English form at Drury Lane, under the management of Mr. Bunn. But, although supported by the best English singers of the day, it remained in the memory of old playgoers only as a vehicle for a striking *bal masqué*, in which the paying portion of the public had been permitted to join, under certain conditions. Of its music the once famous "*Galop*," which at a time when the *galop* began to be in vogue had spread from Paris to London, alone lingered in the memory. But the opera, as

a whole, was entirely new to the Anglo-Italian stage, and was now first given in its entirety (excepting some slight excisions), by some of the most prominent artists of the day. The ingenious *libretto* of Monsieur Scribe, brightly coloured as it was by the sparkling melodies of Auber, and presenting a series of highly dramatic and musical "situations," was certain to command a great success. Indeed, by some of his cotemporaries, this opera was looked upon as Auber's *chef-d'œuvre*. With the aid of a *troupe* of singers, more than efficient even in minor details, and illustrated by splendid "scenery and appointments," "Gustave III." naturally became, in a far higher sense than before, the "town-talk" of London.

With Madame Fiorentini, who had a fine voice and handsome person, as the principal soprano—with Mademoiselle Duprez as the sprightly page, and Calzolari, the conscientious tenor singer, in the part of *Gustavus*, this charming opera was "mounted" with advantages it had never before possessed.* The minor parts, supported by Poultier, a French tenor of note,† and Federico Lablache, gave unusual weight and excellence

* On the English stage, where the double qualities of acting and singing were in those days not to be found combined in one person, a tenor-lover was introduced *to sing* the music of *Gustavus*, whilst the part itself was *acted* by Mr. Warde, a tragedian of considerable merit. A similar arrangement of an operatic work had long before distinguished the English version of the "Barber of Seville," in which the part of *Almaviva* was enacted by a light comedian, whilst an additional character, one *Fiorello*, sang Rossini's music of the part.

† Poultier was originally a working cooper in an establishment at Rouen, where his charming tenor voice attracted the attention first of his brother workmen, and then of persons of influence and note. He was then educated for the lyrical stage, and made a very considerable sensation on his first appearance in the part of *Masaniello*, at the Académie Royale at Paris.

to the *morceaux d'ensemble.* Lorenzo, in the great bass part of *Ankerstrom*, was perhaps less competent to his task, which at least demanded a Coletti. Carlotta Grisi made her *début* for the season as the principal *danseuse* in the "Divertissement des Folies," and gave additional lustre to the brilliant opera by her dancing in a *pas* originally illustrated by *the* Taglioni.

In addition to the unquestionable attraction of "Gustavus," more remained in store for the *dilettanti* frequenting Her Majesty's Theatre, even before the closing for the Easter recess. With so many blows to strike during the season, I was obliged to let them fall in hasty and hot succession. It may be recorded *en passant*, that Mademoiselle Duprez made a third successful venture as *Amina* in the "Sonnambula," producing, perhaps, more effect in this most hazardous of parts (many other great rivals having been so associated with the character in the public mind) than in any other which she attempted. Coletti, also, made his *début* for the season on this occasion in the secondary part of the *Count*, singing the "Vi Ravviso" to perfection. He likewise gave, on the same evening, some scenes from his great part of the *Doge* in the "Due Foscari." Other musical events must be hurried on in this "History," as belonging to the course of this busy season.

The pre-Easter period was further to be signalized by the first representation on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre of another of the great works of Auber, the "Muette de Portici," which now appeared at this theatre under the same (Italianized) title. Apart from the general popularity and universal attraction of this seductive opera, new elements of interest and curiosity were thrown into it by the manage-

ment. Although it may be inconsistent to speak first of the *ballet* department in the record of an opera, yet in an exceptional composition, where the heroine is played by a dumb woman (who even gives the title to the work), this may be pardoned; and certainly precedence is on every account due to Mademoiselle Monti, who made her *début* as *Fenella*. This highly-gifted Italian pantomimist gave the astonished spectators of Her Majesty's Theatre a thoroughly new "*muette*." Her performance was that of a great, experienced *actress*, and not, as hitherto, of a mere *danseuse*. Though never devoid of grace, her performance was marked by feeling, passion, and, above all, naturalness of manner and attitude, and it gave a reality to the scene which the conventional gestures of a *danseuse* never can impart.

It may be remarked that in the great *ballets* of action, so familiar to travellers in Italy, the principal characters are *played* by pantomimists, who do not dance. It is in the *ballet*, properly so called, or rather in the incidental *divertissement*, that the dancers alone appear, as in the incidental dances of an opera.

Another striking *début* on the same occasion was that of Massol, the esteemed French barytone, whose *Pietro* was considered in Paris, as it was hailed by the London public, as the one and unrivalled *Pietro* of the lyrical stage. Such a thorough artist, both as singer and actor, was a great acquisition to the company of Her Majesty's Theatre. A host of "first appearances" were still in reserve: Pardini, a *tenore di forza*, vigorous and dramatic, as *Masaniello;* Scotti, a tenor with a pleasant voice, as *Alfonzo;* Mercuriali, a painstaking second tenor, as *Lorenzo*. The group of artists was

completed by Madame Fiorentini, in the character of *Elvira*; and Mademoiselle Ferraris, along with that accomplished dancer, Monsieur Charles, in the incidental *tarantella*. With such a combination, with a highly effective organization of the *ensemble*, in choruses as well as in scenic appliances, "La Muta di Portici" formed a truly valuable element of attraction in this bustling, busy year.

Easter came, and went; and Her Majesty's Theatre reopened with the same feverish excitement. The great operatic battle of the most important season yet known was now to be fought. There was busy preparation in the camp on every side. The forces of the main army of attack were now marshalled, all "eager for the fray," as they felt how important to them were the laurels to be won on the operatic field before that "Congress of All Nations." The first shot fired on the reopening night could only be looked upon as a preliminary flourish. The heavy artillery may be said to have been first brought into play on the occasion of Lablache's reappearance as the inimitable representative of *Dulcamara* in the "Elisir." Mademoiselle Duprez, with her finished vocalization and her child-like, graceful vivacity, contributed to make the opening fire tell effectively; but the genuine attack was still to come.

A goodly array was ready to advance, comprising Madame Sontag, Sophie Cruvelli, Madame Ugalde, Catherine Hayes, Barbieri-Nini, and Mademoiselle Nau, the then puissant Alboni completing the list. Amid such a "starry host," lesser artists, like Alaymo and Giuliani, disappeared. "Lucrezia Borgia" restored the ever-welcome Gardoni, so often killed by wicked

rumour, so often resuscitated to the delight of his admirers. Moreover, a great night, which was to form one of the salient events of the season, if not of the history of my management, was at hand. The evening of the 1st of May, the day when the "Great Exhibition" was to be opened to "all nations," was deemed worthy to be celebrated by an especial homage. The celebration took place unannounced by any "puff preliminary," but was worthy of the occasion.

After a brilliant performance of the "Muta di Portici," the curtain rose upon a well-devised scene of the monster "Crystal Palace" (the first of that illustrious species), and the surrounding landscape of Hyde Park. The stage was crowded with a vast assemblage of the whole company in the dresses of the people of all lands, who were to be welcomed. An "occasional-ode," composed by Balfe, the conductor, heralded the symbolical congress of "Peace and Goodwill" among nations. Characteristic dances of different European countries, given by the whole force of the choreographic establishment, and grouped in a clever *divertissement*, carried out the prevailing idea; whilst the "National Anthem" told of England's triumph as of its loyalty. This "Masque of the Great Exhibition," as the performance might have been appropriately called, was as happily executed as it was cleverly conceived; and with scenes from the "Matrimonio Segreto" for Lablache, and further displays of the resources of the *ballet*, the "Exhibition" season certainly did open with unusual *éclat*.

The reappearance of Madame Sontag, the chief star in the constellation of the opera firmament, may be said to have been merely a prelude to her performance in one

of the many new operas which were destined to follow—hardly less in number than the various *prime donne* who were to figure in them. Madame Sontag resumed her position at Her Majesty's Theatre in her own charming impersonation of *La Figlia*. She came again apparently as young as ever. The sarcastic remark applied to a lady in one of Scribe's comedies, "Last year she was thirty—next year she will be only twenty-nine," seemed to have passed from irony to truth. Her success had been uninterrupted during my direction of the Italian Opera in Paris in the past winter. To the artist the magic of success is the best elixir, as happiness is to all the most efficacious *cosmetic*. Again she shone forth, not only with her faultless execution, but with that mixture of *naïveté*, affectionate playfulness, arch humour, and exuberance of animal spirits, which had exercised so powerful a charm towards the close of the previous season.

The new opera—the first *entirely* new opera of the season—was "Le Tre Nozze" of Alary, which had been first produced during my opera campaign in Paris, and had there won genuine applause. The light and graceful music of this opera seems to have been more especially suited to the taste of the Parisians, who, led away by their enthusiasm beyond their sounder judgment, applauded every *morceau*, *à l'outrance*.* The "Tre Nozze" was not equally fortunate in England. That the new opera succeeded is unquestionable, and also that it

* One scene more than all took the fancy of the *habitués* of the *Italiens*, and was sufficient alone to ensure the success of Monsieur Alary's work—a scene in which the unwieldy Lablache was taught to dance the polka by the object of his adoration, personated by Madame Sontag. In this instance, at least, it was as pleased children, not as sound lovers of music, that the Parisians applauded.

"drew money to the treasury." The pretty, sparkling melodies which pervaded the whole piece were sure to please. The canvas upon which the composer had embroidered his bright and dazzling flowers of melody was flimsy enough in itself—a compilation made out of the "Monsieur de Pourceaugnac" of Molière, with a score of well-known "situations" borrowed from as many well-known farces. The composer also may be said, like the *librettist*, to have been as much inspired by memory as by invention. His airs came pleasantly to the ear, like the whispers of old friends; but they were so delightfully culled, so gracefully presented in the new vase of this *opera buffa*, that few but the very critical could fail to exclaim "How charming!" or be unwilling to greet once more the dear old favourites in a new garb. The polka, sung by Lablache and Madame Sontag, caught every ear, was hummed by every amateur, was copied on every hand-organ, was sought for eagerly at every music-shop: it has remained a favourite to this very day. With such excellent elements of passing success, no wonder that the "Tre Nozze" was received with favour, if not with triumphant enthusiasm as in Paris.

The admirable acting of Lablache, seconded as he was by the exquisite grace and humour of Madame Sontag, would have carried a far less catching opera to a favourable issue. It was worthy to be ranked with the best scenes in the "Matrimonio" or "Don Pasquale." His efforts to learn courtly manners, as a shy and embarrassed provincial nobleman—his attempts to follow his *inamorata* in the hurried "mazes of the dance"—his awkward experiments at love-making, whilst they suggested the gambols of a young hippo-

potamus, never "o'erstepped the modesty of nature." Gardoni, with Mesdames Giuliani and Ida Bertrand, contributed to the charming *ensemble;* and Signor Ferranti, a young, lively, and most promising light barytone, made a very successful *début* on the occasion. Thus put before the audience of Her Majesty's Theatre, "Le Tre Nozze" formed an agreeable variety in the *répertoire* of the season.

Although "novelty" was the watchword of the year, yet no season could pass without "Don Giovanni;" and "Don Giovanni" was accordingly welcomed, in its turn, even by the most steady clamourers against the hackneyed and familiar. "Don Giovanni," in truth, could never be old, could never be worn out. As Nina de l'Enclos in her climacteric not only swayed the hearts of her admirers by her unfading charms but carried off the adorers of her younger rivals, so did the master-opera resume its supremacy, in spite of all the fresher beauties of "Young Music." With the exception of Madame Fiorentini as *Donna Anna*, and Calzolari as *Ottavio*, the "cast" was the same as in the previous season. The admirers of "Don Giovanni," it should be remarked, have always consisted rather of the general public than of the regular *habitués* of the Italian Opera. I once heard a gentleman belonging to the last category say, that he would rather stand in the rain outside Her Majesty's Theatre, than go inside and listen to "Don Giovanni."

But claims press on; and the path must be cleared for another *prima donna*, and another novelty—at all events a "novelty" on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre. Sophie Cruvelli was to return to the same stage where she had been already admired and applauded, notwithstanding the difficulty of her position

during one of the triumphant "Jenny-Lind seasons;" and she was to return with matured powers and profitable experience. Sims Reeves was to be welcomed once more in Italian opera. Both were to appear in Beethoven's great work, "Fidelio," which under these auspices was to find a home for the first time within the walls of Her Majesty's Theatre. Both Cruvelli and Sims Reeves had been eminently successful in the first winter of my luckless venture at the Italian Opera of Paris. The lady especially was firmly established in the hearts of the Parisians, with whom, as was said by a great personage, she was "*sympathique au possible.*"

Doubtfully interesting as the music of the great Beethoven's one opera may be to those exclusively brought up in the admiration of the modern Italian style—or, rather, much as it may be beyond the musical intelligence of minds educated almost solely for the florid dramatic school—it is sure in England, although never very popular in the land of its birth, to command appreciating and admiring audiences. The announcement of "Fidelio" is as certain to fill a theatre with a numerous throng of *dilettanti* as "Don Giovanni" is to attract other classes. Whatever may be said in prejudiced disparagement of English musical acquirements, English taste and judgment never fail to vindicate themselves on occasions of the performance of great musical master-works. "Fidelio" assembled an overflowing concourse of music-lovers within the walls of Her Majesty's Theatre. Nor was this crowd assembled in vain. The performance of Mademoiselle Cruvelli as the hero-heroine of this mighty opera proved a well-deserved and unquestionable triumph.

Mention has been already made of the unmistakeable

genius of this gifted young artist. But it was a genius, wild, erratic, reckless, uncontrollable by the dictates of pure, rigid taste in art. This genius was unquenched, as it was unquenchable; but it had now been modified by labour, experience, and time. Something of its former waywardness undoubtedly remained; but the fire, the inspiration, the instinctive intelligence, were certain to exercise an electric spell. Mademoiselle Cruvelli's performance of *Fidelio* was magnificent, both in singing and acting. The sympathies of the audience were stirred to the quick. The production of the opera was one of the greatest events of a season prolific in events. The English tenor had *his* due in this memorable evening. Sims Reeves sang with a degree of feeling, as well as power, which elicited warm approbation among his supporters and admirers, and must have silenced the cavillings of the detractors of "native talent." The reverence and care with which a work of Beethoven had been treated by the management were sufficiently evidenced by the enrolment of all the principal artists of the theatre to lend their services on this great occasion. Among those who added to the *ensemble* by joining in the celebrated "Chorus of Prisoners" were to be found the names of Gardoni, Calzolari, Pardini, Massol, F. Lablache, Ferranti, and Lorenzo. The performance was one of singular excellence; and the memorable "Fidelio" evening established Mademoiselle Cruvelli, in unprejudiced English minds, as one of the greatest lyrical artists of the day.

Events still pressed on. Scarcely had the bills heralded Madame Sontag to appear in the "Barbiere" and in "Don Pasquale;" scarcely could Cruvelli give another "taste of her quality" in "Norma," where, dis-

daining all traditional "points," and relying on her own inspiration, she once more fairly "took the house by storm," even to disposing the hearer to forget the famous *Norma* of Madame Grisi; scarcely had Caroline Duprez a poor "brief hour" allotted her wherein to please her admirers in one act of the "Lucia," and Sims Reeves the same spare allowance to shine in a truncated portion of his great and favourite part—another "taking" novelty was forcing its way forwards to the footlights, and previously-established glories gave way to leave room to do honour to the stranger.

The production of the "Enfant Prodigue" of Auber, the popular composer of the "Muette de Portici" and "Gustave III.," was undoubtedly a great operatic event. This latest "grand" opera of the fertile *maëstro* had obtained a great success in Paris, although perhaps not equal to that which had made the two above-mentioned operas standard works for a generation at least. Composed to a *libretto* supplied by the most ingenious as well as the most prolific of modern dramatists, the music was already placed upon a high pedestal of interest. A certain curiosity, also, was occasioned by the fact that the subject was founded on the well-known parable of Holy Writ, and might thus be deemed objectionable to English feeling. It may be said at once, that every such fear was dissipated at once. The simple tale of the son, seduced from the peaceful home of his fathers by the glittering promises of a town life, led by designing adventurers into every dissipation by which they profit; plunged by his passions into excesses which entail as their natural result, misery and repentance; and then, humbled and abashed, seeking forgiveness and peace of mind in his desert home—all this had been set forth

by the rare and clever dramatist in a manner which could awaken no religious susceptibilities on the score of the story. A highly interesting and exciting plot had been skilfully worked into the original simple *donnée*, so as to afford all the elements of dramatic complication, at the same time that it offered a framework for pompous and picturesque magnificence, in the way of scenery, decoration, and costume.

Perhaps, in his illustrative music, Auber had not fully reached the simple sublimity of his subject. It was possibly beyond the nature of the lively Frenchman. But he had showered his rich store of melody abundantly upon the work, and had given to the world operatic pieces by turns grand, animated, and pathetic, and almost invariably dramatic and pleasing in character. He had also bestowed a *couleur locale* upon his music, fully befitting a story the scene of which lay between the tents of the Israelites, the Desert, and Egyptian Memphis. The rare intuition by which Auber was guided in his applications of a due *couleur locale* to his subject, and which has been so ably displayed in his "Muette" (Neapolitan), his "Domino Noir" (Spanish), and now again in the Oriental character of his "Enfant Prodigue," was almost marvellous in a musician who had never quitted his own country, and probably rarely wandered beyond the walls of Paris.

The "cast" was very strong, including Gardoni as the erring child, Massol as his father, Sontag as his betrothed, Coletti as the High-priest of Isis. Massol especially achieved a great triumph by his exquisite rendering of a pathetic *romance*, sung where the distracted father seeks his lost son among the Memphian

crowds—a *morceau* which had created a perfect *furore* as executed by him in Paris. He leaped at once into a far higher position on the Anglo-Italian stage than he had hitherto occupied. Madame Ugalde, one of the most admired of modern French florid singers, and withal a *piquante* and lively actress, was included also in the "cast," though in a minor part; and, on thus making her first appearance, was received with the honours due to her great reputation. Rosati, too, won fresh laurels as the chief of the "Almées" in a *pas de poignards*—a dance in which wild Oriental music, accompanying measures equally fanciful, and increasing in frenzy of character as poniards flashed and forms whirled around, fairly bewildered the dazzled spectator, and brought down a perfect hurricane of applause. The music, as well as the characteristic movements of this once famous "Pas de Poignards," may still be heard in many "extravaganzas" and pantomimes of the present day (1864). It never fails of exciting its old accustomed "sensation." In spite of hypercritical grumblings at what was termed "flimsy French music," there is no doubt that the "Prodigo," thus brilliantly executed, and placed upon the stage with a lavish magnificence which equalled if it did not surpass that of the "Académie" in Paris, was one of the great successes of this brilliant season. Her Majesty the Queen, especially, expressed the delight she experienced in witnessing this opera. The success was even greater than on its first production in Paris. A spirit had been infused into it by the dashing "leading" of Balfe, always lively and spirited in his style, which had not existed under the more formal and heavy working of the Parisian orchestra; and on the stage of Her Majesty's Theatre the

ensemble, especially as regarded the female singers, was really of a decidedly higher order.

Two grand morning concerts, and then came the revival of the pleasant although thoroughly antiquated "La Prova d'un Opera Seria" of Gnecco, for the purpose of giving Madame Ugalde an opportunity of displaying to advantage her vocal agility and her powers of comic acting, by the side of such a compeer as Lablache. A revival of the "Sylphide" took place, for Marie Taglioni to follow in the steps of her illustrious aunt. These, however, were only little *hors d'œuvres* to amuse the public whilst another "course" of more solid fare was in preparation to be served up before it. Another novelty, again exciting considerable interest and curiosity in the musical world, was nigh at hand.

It had long been rumoured that Sigismund Thalberg, the celebrated pianist, was sedulously engaged on an opera, "expressly composed for Her Majesty's Theatre." The wonderful execution of this accomplished artist, combined with a peculiar largeness of style in his compositions for the pianoforte, had already won for him high "name and fame." But as yet he had never written for the lyrical stage. He was known to be a sound musician, and, for some time past, to have given all his intelligence to dramatic composition. No wonder, then, that the first performance of "Florinda, or the Moors in Spain," music by Thalberg, *libretto* by Scribe, should have caused much excitement, and filled the area of Her Majesty's Theatre to suffocation. Thalberg had long been admired, appreciated, and respected in England. His friends were numerous, the worshippers of his talent as a pianist countless. All had a most legitimate object for their curiosity and interest.

To say that the "Florinda" of Thalberg failed of success would be saying too much; yet it would be untrue to assert that the success was uncontested. The music was careful, elaborate, "musician-like." The excessive elaboration, indeed, of all his pieces was alone sufficient to militate against general appreciation of his many striking merits. In a letter from Monsieur Scribe, who wrote expressing his great grief that severe illness prevented his superintendence of rehearsals, we find the following passage—"*Le seul conseil que je puisse vous donner c'est de faire la guerre aux longueusr; car il doit toujours y en avoir immensement dans le premier ouvrage dramatique d'un compositeur. Coupez le plus possible! Ce qui est retranché ne fait jamais mauvais effet.*" The experienced dramatist spoke the truth.

"Florinda" was generally voted "dull." Its very careful masterly character stood in its way, when dramatic fire (of less sterling quality, perhaps) might have carried the day. In justice to the composer it must be added, that never had the able dramatist produced a duller work than this disjointed and uninteresting *libretto.* "*Aliquando dormitat Homerus.*" Unfortunately for M. Thalberg, his *collaborateur* seemed to have allowed his brighter faculties to go to sleep over the somewhat soporific and well-worn story of the treachery of Count Julian, in revenge for the seduction of his daughter.* Nothing could have been more favourable to the success of "Florinda" than the talent

* It seems highly probable that this opera-book was one of Scribe's earlier efforts, vamped up for the occasion—a galvanized mummy of old days, in French theatrical language, generally called an "*ours.*" It is scarcely possible that his matured experience could have proved so much at fault.

and zeal of a group of artists, among whom were Sophie Cruvelli, Sims Reeves, Calzolari, Coletti, and Lablache. Cruvelli exerted her powerful energies to the utmost, and with wonderful effect. All did their best; and *how* good that best was, opera-goers of 1851 can tell. The management had decked out the opera with scenery and costumes of great magnificence. A slight additional attraction was afforded in the *début* of Marie Cruvelli (sister of the admired *prima donna*), as a contralto, in the small part of a page. But "Florinda" was not fated to live. The carefully-reared bantling, in fact, wanted the essential conditions of vitality.

But let it not be supposed that "Florinda" was a positive failure. It received the very highest post of honour of the season, inasmuch as it was played "by command" on the occasion of a grand "State visit" of her Majesty to the "old opera-house." This much-prized solemnity was held with peculiar significance, and with even more than usual splendour, in a year when "all the world" was assembled in the crowded capital of England. More than ever, this mingling of Royalty with subject in public wore the aspect of a national celebration. The selection of "Florinda" on this occasion gave M. Thalberg's opera a peculiar *éclat*. Although no royal patronage could endue the work with life, at least it shed honour over its unavoidable death.

Again the record of a fine performance of "Le Nozze di Figaro," with Sontag, Cruvelli, Fiorentini, Coletti, Ferranti, and Lablache—of "Ernani," with Cruvelli and Sims Reeves—and of a *réunion* of Rosati, Taglioni, and Ferraris, in "Les Graces"—of a night of "Spanish Dancers"—all must be cast aside for more and yet more "novelty."

Mademoiselle Alboni was still to come, adding another to the long list of *prime donne*, and bringing another novelty in her hand from Paris. After a preliminary performance of "La Cenerentola," Mademoiselle Alboni made her real *début* for the season in the latest composition of Auber, written expressly for her during her engagement at the Parisian "Académie"—"Zerline, ou la Corbeille d'Oranges." Being written, however, in haste, in order to utilize the talent of Alboni during a brief engagement at the great French Opera, this trifle was far from contributing to the fame of the deservedly admired French composer. Facility, adroitness, ingenuity, abounded throughout the work, but its forms of melody were undeniably trite. Even those portions of the music expressly composed for the marvellously liquid execution of Mademoiselle Alboni were of little interest, or at all events not of that high order of interest which the genius of Auber warranted his hearers to expect. Nor had his fertile *collaborateur*, Scribe, been much more felicitous. His portion of the work, like that of the musician, was marked by ingenuity, cleverness, and facility; but the same triteness, the same absence of freshness and originality, were observable in the drama and in the music to which it was joined. "Zerlina" served to stimulate the curiosity of the public for a night, and to introduce to the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre that clever and florid French songstress, Mademoiselle Nau (a lady already favourably known in London), who resumed her original part, "created" (as the French have it) at the Académie Royale.

"Zerlina" can scarcely be said to have been pushed aside to make way for "coming events." It trilled

through its night, and then gracefully retired. "Coming events," however, were again pressing forward. After a performance of "Linda di Chamouni," wherein both the sisters Cruvelli appeared, but which was less congenial to the wild and passionate nature of the charming Sophie than any of her more tragic parts—after a revival of "La Gazza Ladra," to afford Mademoiselle Alboni an opportunity of appearing in a part for which she had so strong a predilection,—the last in my seemingly endless list of *prime donne* for the season made her appearance in the person of Madame Barbieri-Nini.

For many years Madame Barbieri-Nini had been one of Italy's greatest and most admired lyric artists. She had divided the operatic throne with Madame Tadolini when that celebrated singer was in her prime. Some of Verdi's operas, most popular in Italy—"I Due Foscari," for instance, and "Macbeth"—were composed expressly for her; and it is an unquestionable fact that her performance in them mainly contributed to their popularity. It may have been considered strange that so illustrious a *prima donna* should never before have appeared on the Anglo-Italian stage. When she now at last did so, it was to obtain only a verdict which sounded distressingly like the phrase so often fatally repeated during the strong political events of the period—"It is too late." Her voice, once of the highest order, a pure *soprano* of wonderful compass and force, had deteriorated from the inevitable effects of time. Her execution was brilliant and bold, but gave the irresistible impression of a sort of reckless audacity. Her acting was energetic, and highly coloured by that southern ardour but too often verging upon exaggeration—a

style which Italians love, but which to cooler natures is apt to inspire a dread that the proverbial "one step" between "the sublime" and "the ridiculous" may be taken at any moment. It cannot be said that the "step" was ever made; still, this constant fear on the part of the audience, there is little doubt, signally marred the effect which the celebrated singer ought to have made upon the English public. Her performance in "Lucrezia Borgia" and in "Anna Bolena" created, however, a certain sensation among the *habitués* of Her Majesty's Theatre, in spite of the change in her once fine organ and her somewhat ungainly movements. At all events, I felt justified in bringing before my subscribers a singer with whose fame all Italy resounded, even although my venture proved to have been made "too late."

The fascinating Cerito figured also in this prolific year towards the close of the season, and once more charmed all lovers of the *ballet* in "Ondine."

Another event, however, was still to come. For the benefit of the conductor, Mr. Balfe, was performed, for the first time on the Italian stage, that genial composer's opera "Les Quatre Fils d'Aymon," under the title of "I Quattro Fratelli." "Les Quatre Fils d'Aymon" was first produced at the Opéra Comique in Paris, and met with much success. It was equally admired in its English form when given at the Princess's Theatre, under the management of Mr. Maddox, as "The Castle of Aymon." But it was always in Germany that it enjoyed its greatest popularity. First produced at Vienna, it quickly visited every capital city and town in Germany, and was everywhere received with enthusiasm. To this day it remains a "stock opera,"

and every military band still executes, on all available occasions, the favourite melodies of "Die Vier Haimon's Kinder." Perhaps there is no one of Mr. Balfe's many operas which abounds so much in lively, spirited, and at the same time original melodies, as this happy inspiration. Owing to the composer's ingenious blending of the two characters of Italian and French styles of composition into a style that may be called *per se* "Balfian," this tuneful work lost nothing of its original effect when transferred to the Italian stage. The music may even be said to have acquired a fresh beauty from being conveyed to the audience in the Italian tongue. Comic *verse* and dramatic *esprit* were preserved, while the countless melodies of the work gained in mellifluous fluency. Sophie Cruvelli, aided by Gardoni, Pardini, Coletti, and Massol, secured a most effective and spirited execution for the work of their friend and fellow-artist; and Mr. Balfe earned, on the occasion of his benefit, a great and legitimate triumph. There was but one regret mingled with the performance of this charming opera—namely, that this genial addition to the *répertoire* of Her Majesty's Theatre was made "for this evening only," and that "I Quattro Fratelli" was not forthwith adopted and naturalized, as it were, on the Anglo-Italian stage.

With this novelty we arrive at the last operatic "event" of a season signalized throughout by extraordinary variety both in operas and executants. The theatre terminated its "subscription nights" with great *éclat*. For a few weeks more Her Majesty's Theatre reopened for a series of representations at (what were called) "playhouse prices." This innovation, which the peculiar circumstances of this ex-

ceptional year and the enormous influx of sightseeing strangers rendered advisable, if not necessary, may be taken (spite its exceptional character) as a "sign of the times." It seemed as though a greater diffusion of musical education, joined to the creation of new locomotive facilities, had forced the great musical establishments to relax their traditional barriers of exclusiveness, and gradually to open more and more to the public that arena which the aristocracy had hitherto regarded as its own. During these "extra" performances, Sophie Cruvelli appeared (by virtue of that great right of "possession," which is generally regarded as "might" as well as "right," among dramatic circles) as *Rosina* in the "Barbiere," and as *Amina* in "La Sonnambula," both being characters already sung by Madame Sontag, whilst that "pet of the public" (for some time past absent from the boards), reappeared in "La Figlia," and in a portion only of "Otello." Madame Barbieri-Nini, and Madame Fiorentini were also brought before the public during these "extra nights." And when the doors of the great lyrical establishment finally closed upon the glories of 1851, efforts had been made, and results achieved in an artistic point of view, such as Her Majesty's Theatre, with all its bygone splendours, had never witnessed. Upon the whole, the year so brilliant in England's annals may be regarded as equally brilliant in those of the microcosm of the opera. Let me add that, in a financial point of view, the "Exhibition Season" of 1851 was profitable to the establishment. But the amount placed to the credit side of the treasury accounts did not cover the deficit already occasioned, more especially by the bad result of

the Italian Opera speculation in Paris. Every prospect held out by the original *programme* had not certainly been fulfilled. The production of the great *ballet*, announced as written by M. de St. Georges expressly for Her Majesty's Theatre, had been found inexpedient; and I paid a large *dédit* to the disappointed author as a compensation. Poor unlucky Ricci also, who had fondly hoped to see one, at least, of his operas adopted on the boards, and had anticipated a journey to England to superintend rehearsals, was unavoidably, in the press of greater attraction, once more "put on the shelf." My desire, moreover, to place before my subscribers the latest composition of Rossini—a great hymn—was thwarted. A well-known connoisseur, Prince P——, who had undertaken the task of inducing the great *maëstro* (ever provokingly unwilling to appear again before the public) to yield to my entreaties, failed utterly in his delicate diplomatic negociation. But, in spite of these failures, far more was realized than had actually been expected.

The "monster" *fête*, given by me in the grounds of my charming villa at Fulham, was too immediately connected with the high position, the *prestige*, and the fortunes of the theatre, to be passed over without a record. These *fêtes* had (as has been stated in an earlier stage of this history) for some years past constituted a remarkable feature in the course of the operatic season. My desire to bring together on these great festive occasions the aristocracy of rank, of art, of science, of intellect, wherever it existed, had always been welcomed and heartily forwarded by the highest in the land. On each annual recurrence they formed one of

the salient events of the "London Season," were the "town-talk" of the day, and always excited a universal desire to obtain invitations, which were regarded as a privilege and a distinction. One of their most *piquant* attractions was, in fact, the mingling of rank and fashion with the artistic body of singers and dancers. Dukes and duchesses danced on the "green sward" with sentimental tenors and sprightly *danseuses*. Foreign diplomacy used its wiles, but only to be agreeable to a "Queen of Song." Science talked gaily with a mighty *basso*, or a fascinating *prima donna*. Music and Painting wandered sociably arm-in-arm along the margin of the Thames; and coronet, pen, brush, throat of priceless value, and lithesome limbs, all joined, amidst rich illuminations and *feux de Bengale*, in one *grande ronde* of unrestricted hilarity and enjoyment.

In the exceptional year of 1851, the year of "England's welcome to all nations," my Garden *Fête* was productive of even a more lively "sensation" than usual. The pleasant grounds were thronged not only with distinguished English company, and with the foreign diplomatists (who had an especial relish of the *tutti frutti* compound so daintily served up), but with most of the celebrated foreign guests at that time attracted to London by the Great Exhibition. Dinners had already been given by me during the season to many of the foreign "illustrious" in rank and talent who thronged the British metropolis, and who were invited to partake of my hospitality along with English noblemen and gentlemen. But on the day of the "monster *fête*" a much larger number attended my summons. This particular occasion may, indeed, almost be cited as the

"culminating point" of my hitherto prosperous fortunes. The base of the fabric might, possibly, be insensibly giving way, unfavourable winds may have already assailed the structure from various quarters: nevertheless my footing in theatrical and social circles, during many years, was perhaps never firmer than at the date of the brilliant *fête* of this, the memorable Exhibition year, 1851.*

Brilliant as was the aspect of the Exhibition year in London, however, dark clouds were overshadowing my horizon elsewhere. In my struggle against the difficulties and hindrances incident to my position as Director of the Italian Opera in Paris (conjointly with my establishment in London), I had, I conceived, used my habitual tact, backed by long experience, in the choice of my operatic troop and in my mode of dealing with the Parisian people. But the adverse elements with which I had to fight were too powerful. Recent revolutions, constant internal mistrust, and political enmities, had induced the richer and more fashionable portion of French society to hold back altogether from social intercourse, and from those recre-

* Monsieur Jules Janin, the celebrated French author, who was present in London as "Exhibition correspondent" of the *Journal des Débats*, gave a published account of this *fête*, painted with all the varied colours of his rainbow pen, and sparkling with all the coruscations of his dazzling "firework" style. "*Je ne peux pas vous séparer*," he writes, "*de mon séjour dans votre bonne ville de Londres, où j'ai été accueilli avec tant de faveur.*" "*Albion, Alcyon Albion!*" he writes again in extasy, when penning his regrets at quitting the country. In his account of the Exhibition, he describes a dinner at my villa, at which Mr. Disraeli, M. Van der Weyer, the Dukes of Cleveland and Leinster, the Marquis of Clanricarde, M. Anthony de Rothschild, &c., &c., were present.

ations formerly indulged in by that class. The sudden reanimation of the "Société du Faubourg St. Germain," on the occasion of the "Sontag concerts," has already been mentioned; but, unfortunately for me, this was only an exceptional case, and after its brief flash the Faubourg St. Germain relapsed into its former state of lethargy and habitual *bouderie*. Deprived of so influential a component part of the wealth, rank, and fashion of Paris, I had a severe contest to wage. I had carried on the season of 1850-51, in Paris, at a considerable loss; yet, nevertheless, I boldly undertook the new season of 1851-52, convinced that firmness and good management must obtain the victory "in the long run." But, again, it was impossible for me to foresee the storm that was once more about to burst suddenly over Parisian society; and, although the political atmosphere was certainly to some extent overcast, the *Coup d'Etat* of the 2nd December, 1851, fell upon Paris (and upon me!) like a thunderbolt. By this thunderbolt the fortunes of the Italian opera, together with many other institutions of even superior importance, were shaken to their foundations.*

* The loss, by circumstances over which I had no control, in the two disastrous seasons of 1850-1, and 1851-2, whilst directing the Italian Opera in Paris, amounted to nearly 500,000 francs, or 20,000*l.* My loss however, painful as it was, never affected my sentiments with respect to the Emperor of the French. I was present in the streets, and can bear witness to the personal bravery of Louis Napoleon—a point which has been erroneously contested. During the conflict of the *Coup d'Etat* he was riding about at the head of his staff and exposing himself in all directions; nor was this the only occasion on which I have had evidence of his cool self-possession amid unquestionable dangers.

I can also bear witness to the fearful anxiety of all parties, and to their terror of the *Rouges*, until the *Coup d'Etat* relieved

them of the nightmare which weighed upon every mind. In a conversation held a short time previously with the Marquis de Pastoret, one of the chiefs of the Legitimist party and Treasurer to Henri V., he openly avowed to me, "It is not now a question of this or that dynasty; it is a question of our lives, our property, and the honour of our children." How deceived were many of our leading men respecting the Emperor! How often have I heard and combated opinions about him but little flattering to his abilities!—opinions which, after he had established his position in France, were replaced by the most laudatory phrases.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Season of 1852—Artists in Prospect—Mdlle. Wagner, Mdme. Sontag, Gardoni, Beletti, &c.—Disappointment created by Sontag's Inability to come to England—Opening Night, April 1st, with "Maria di Rohan"—Ferlotti—The Wagners' Breach of Engagement, caused by Mr. Gye's Endeavours to attach Mdlle. Wagner to the Covent Garden "Troupe"—Unfounded Rumours of Desertion on the Part of Leading Artists—Injurious Effects of the Wagner Failure—The Friends of the Theatre hold a Meeting, with a View to support the Director—High Quality of the Parties concerned in this Movement—Resolutions adopted at the Meeting—Tendency of the Arrangement come to, not wholly advantageous—Madame Lagrange, her Value at this Juncture—Illusory Hopes of Sontag's Return towards End of Season—Madame Charton engaged—Production of "Casilda" in August—Not successful—Close of the Season, under uneasy Auguries.

As has already been intimated, the season of 1852 was not permitted to open with that confidence and sanguine reliance upon good fortune which had attended the director in previous years. Not only the consequences of the disastrous campaign in Paris, but many other untoward incidents which no experience could have parried and no foresight averted, militated against hopeful anticipations. The sunshine seemed to have departed from Her Majesty's Theatre; and certain gathering clouds were already dark enough to threaten a storm.

The peculiar uncertainties and difficulties attendant upon the preparations for the ensuing campaign, prevented the opening of Her Majesty's Theatre until unusually late in the season. Rumours indeed had been gradually gaining ground to the intent that the theatre would not throw open its doors to the public at all. Rivalry and jealous enmity had too great an interest in fostering, if not propagating, such a report for the opportunity to be lost.

At length, however, I published my list of engagements, and my programme of performances for the season. At the head of the list appeared Madame Sontag, then in the zenith of her popularity, and Mademoiselle Johanna Wagner, a German *prima donna*, whose fame rivalled in her own country that of the once popular idol of all Northern Europe, Jenny Lind. On so high a pedestal, indeed, had Mademoiselle Wagner been placed, that the announcement of her appearance at Her Majesty's Theatre excited universal interest and curiosity among musical circles, absorbing operatic minds almost as much as had done the advent of the fame-heralded "Swedish Nightingale." A magnificent voice, a broad and grand school of vocalization, and a marvellous dramatic power, joined to a comely person, were confidently asserted to form the almost unequalled attractions of this young lady, on whose co-operation the future fortunes of the establishment were now considered in a great measure to depend. On the list also was Mademoiselle Cruvelli, whose reputation in London stood deservedly high, and who was sure to be welcomed back to her post with enthusiasm; Madame Fiorentini also, who was a favourite in the eyes of a considerable portion of the subscribers; Mademoiselle Alboni, too, was to be ex-

pected; and Mademoiselle Ida Bertrand was to be the "stock" contralto. The tenors were, Gardoni, Calzolari, and Pardini. Lablache—the great Lablache—was to lead the army of bass voices as heretofore, bringing with him his son. Beletti, once so popular, was again to contribute his aid on his return from the American expedition with Jenny Lind. Other old friends were expected to join the forces. In addition to the three leading tenors, another of Italian repute, Negretti, was to be looked for; and De Bassini, a barytone of note, was to add more strength to a troop already powerful.

The prospects, as far as regarded a "strong company," were as high as ever. With such a "hand" to play, I might still look forward to winning the game, and repairing the losses of fortune in the past. But an evil vein of luck had set in, and still ran adverse to the critical venture, sweeping away the manager's most sanguine hopes in its disastrous current. Firstly, arrived the intelligence, that Madame Sontag "could not come." She was ill (I heard to my discomfiture), with impaired powers, and a deterioration of the quality of her voice, which called imperatively for a rest of several months. With Madame Sontag fled also the hope which I had been allowed to cherish, that the popular *maëstro* of the day, Giacomo Meyerbeer, would place in my hands for first representation at Her Majesty's Theatre, a new opera in which that excellent artist was to appear. It was but little consolation that Count Rossi wrote to him to express his hopes, with those of the Countess, that the success of Mademoiselle Wagner would more than compensate him for my disappointment. The loss of two great trump cards was not to be repaid by the "points" which a remaining "trump"

might win. And again, this "card" also, on which I had built great expectations, was fated to be torn from my hand.

As has been intimated, the management had depended upon Mademoiselle Wagner as the principal element of attraction in the way of novelty during the season of 1852. So great was her reputation that a new *furore* was confidently expected. The words "Wagner mania" and "Wagner crushes," it was thought, might supersede the old appellation of "Jenny Lind mania," and the old proverbial expression of "a Jenny Lind crush." So powerful was the *prestige* of Mademoiselle Wagner's name at that period, and so confident the anticipations of her great success, that subscriptions among the operatic booksellers, the "middlemen" of operatic lettings, were unprecedentedly large this season. Mr. Mitchell alone subscribed for 10,000*l.* It is not the place here to dilate upon the workings for good or evil of this system, which has taken so firm a root in the theatrical affairs of London.

All my brilliant anticipations were destined to be rudely destroyed by bad faith, chicanery, and meanness.

Although the principal circumstances of this most unfortunate affair, which mainly contributed to the failure of the season, did not occur until after the opening of the theatre, it would be as well perhaps, even at the sacrifice of strict accuracy in the chronological order of events, to detail at once the relation which these circumstances bore to one of the most unfortunate periods of my management.

Very many months previously I had sought to attach the great German *prima donna* to Her Majesty's Theatre, and through the intermediation of a

Dr. Bacher, a friend and ally of the Wagner family, an engagement was concluded with Mademoiselle Wagner and her father. All was considered finally and conclusively settled. I relied upon the good faith and fair dealing of the artists with whom the contract had been ratified, as I had always done in similar cases. I had suffered before, it is true, from the vacillations, the overstrained susceptibilities and unsteadiness of purpose inherent in the Teutonic nature; but I had not been placed face to face with mean chicanery and disingenuous evasion of obvious truth. But now I was about to reap a harvest of sad experience.

While I reposed upon my legitimate expectations, more tempting offers, it appeared, had been made to the lady by the management of the rival Italian Opera at Covent Garden. The prospect of increased gain was too alluring to be resisted by the natures with which I unfortunately had to deal. What was good faith, in their minds, when weighed in the balance with a somewhat bigger heap of gold? They failed to recognise the very existence of any possible counterbalance. The engagement formally contracted was ignored—the friend was repudiated *as* a friend, and declared to be nothing more than an interested agent—the main facts (and well-established facts) of the whole negociation were boldly and unblushingly denied. The smallest pretext was employed to give a faint semblance of legitimate dealing to this repudiation of a fair contract. Certain stipulations as to not singing at other public places—stipulations always made and understood in all artistic engagements—had never, it was said, been strictly ratified by father and daughter. It was declared also that the previous payments which I had promised had not duly

come to hand on the day and hour announced. But in the legal proceedings which naturally followed on this breach of faith, it turned out that neither of these two petty "saving clauses" could be in any way established on behalf of Wagnerian trickery.

The more lucrative engagement with the Covent Garden Opera was accepted by father and daughter; but the director of Her Majesty's Theatre could not submit to see one of his best "subjects" snatched from him to be added to the resources of the rival establishment. I applied for an injunction in Chancery to prevent Mademoiselle Wagner from appearing at the Italian Opera at Covent Garden. The injunction was granted. An appeal against this judgment was lodged in the superior court, to be argued before the Lord Chancellor.

Popular feeling, generally bestowed upon those who are wronged by quibbling chicanery and bad faith, was, in this instance all on my side. It grew stronger when in a letter written by Herr Wagner, the father, appeared the insolent words, "England is to be valued only for her money." The indignation of the public at this display of vulgar greed and conceit waxed higher and higher. The explanation offered by the Wagner counsel, that the words should be translated, "England is only able to reward with her money," was received in court with shouts of derision, as only giving a still worse interpretation to their meaning. The injunction was confirmed. Mademoiselle Wagner was unable to profit by the attempted trickery so far as to sing at Covent Garden; but by the legal decision I did not obtain her services at my own establishment. The loss was confirmed—the damage done. Mademoiselle Wagner found herself obliged to return to Germany, the dis-

appointed victim of a grasping avarice, "that o'erleaps itself."

Legal proceedings were by no means terminated by the confirmation of the injunction; and an action was brought by me against Mr. Gye, the director of the Covent Garden Opera, for damages to the amount of 20,000*l.* After a variety of legal and other impediments and delays, such as appear inevitably to attend upon law-suits (but which, deeply interesting as they were to parties concerned, can but little interest the modern reader), judgment in this case was given in the Court of Queen's Bench in favour of the plaintiff; one judge however, out of the four, being dissentient.

The final settlement of this long-protracted cause came forward on the 20th February, 1853. During the proceeding of the action, everything had seemed to intimate that the jury would give heavy damages. So strong was the impression, that Sir Alexander Cockburn, who was on the side of the defendant and had been obliged, by other business, to leave the court before the verdict, sent afterwards to know the amount of the damages given. But, to the surprise of all concerned, the jury, though finding a verdict for the plaintiff, refused all damages, on the plea that there was not sufficient evidence of Mr. Gye's previous knowledge of the contract existing between me and the Wagners.

Some weeks previously to the final blow struck in this ill-starred affair—wherein the favourable decision in my favour had become a "dead letter" as far as regarded my own advantage, leaving me only heavy legal expenses to defray—the theatre had opened for the season. It had opened amidst uncertainties, anxieties, and harassing legal actions (besides the wretched Wagner quarrel),

connected with the fortunes of the establishment. So soon as the body appeared faint, and likely to give way beneath the great pressure of disaster, the vultures gathered in force in the darkening air.

On Thursday, April 1st (an ill-omened day, presaging as it were a mocking and delusive result), the splendid interior of Her Majesty's Theatre was at last thrown open to the public with Donizetti's opera of "Maria di Rohan," in which Signor Ferlotti, a barytone of great note and considerable power, made his first appearance in the important part of *De Chevreux*, supported by Madame Fiorentini, Mademoiselle Ida Bertrand, and Calzolari. As a singer of a fine quality of voice, a well-exercised "method" of the modern Italian school, considerable feeling, and no small powers as an actor, Ferlotti made a most favourable impression, but not an impression of that commanding nature which could place him, with all his merits, among the "stars" of the season, whose lustre could in any way illuminate the beclouded fortunes of the theatre. Madame Guy Stephan was the only support of the *ballet* on the opening night. Amidst the cruel uncertainties of the preliminary preparations, no more could be done for the brilliancy of the choreographic department on that occasion. The superior artists of the *ballet* were yet to be mustered. Beletti, the same steady singer who had been a favourite during the Jenny Lind seasons, was shortly afterwards added to the forces of the establishment, and on the occasion of his reappearance was enthusiastically welcomed in Rossini's rarely-given *opera buffa*, "L'Italiana in Algieri." This opera had been selected for the *début* of Mademoiselle D'Angri, a *contralto* of some merit and repute, who achieved her *succès d'estime* without

materially advancing the interests of the theatre. She appeared shortly afterwards in "La Cenerentola," but without creating any marked sensation. She was, however, an excellent artist. As for more powerful allies, Cruvelli, Lablache, and Gardoni came to the rescue in the "Norma." Lablache was *the* Lablache, the favourite among favourites, at once the cherished artist, the father and the dear old friend of all who bore affection to Her Majesty's Theatre. Gardoni was still one of the most popular of tenors, having then but one other tenor with whom to contest the palm on the Anglo-Italian stage of London. Cruvelli was unquestionably, and with legitimate right, a great attraction. In the "Barbiere," in her pathetic impersonation of the "Fidelio," in "Ernani," in "La Sonnambula," this gifted *prima donna* worked zealously and energetically to conjure the spell of disaster from within the walls of Her Majesty's Theatre; but the spell was too strong to be broken by even so powerful a genius as Mademoiselle Sophie Cruvelli. Gallantly, also, strove in the cause Lablache, Gardoni, Calzolari, Beletti, and Ferlotti. But victory could not, nay, will not always crown the most heroic deeds of arms. Rosati, again, did her best to dazzle all eyes and win all hearts in vain; the spell rested still with malignant influence upon the edifice, and was not to be dissolved, even by the enchantments of enchanters so able and so loyally devoted.

To the treachery of the Wagners, father and daughter, must be chiefly attributed the disadvantageous position in which the direction of Her Majesty's Theatre was now placed. The defalcation of the star, relied upon as the *primum mobile* of attraction had, from the first, thrown all the arrangements of the establishment into confusion.

The confidence of the public, which judges by results not causes, was destroyed. The non-arrival of Madame Sontag, whose name still continued to appear in the catalogue of forthcoming attractions, increased the general dissatisfaction. In the meanwhile, the most damaging reports were sedulously propagated, and were on all sides current in the "chit-chat" of the day, to the infinite detriment of the establishment. Now it was confidently asserted that the theatre would immediately close; now it was rumoured that Gardoni was about to leave the company; next that Mr. Balfe, the conductor, intended to secede; now again that Lablache was dissatisfied, and Cruvelli anxious to depart. Most of these pernicious rumours were in every way premature, although in some respects they received partial confirmation at a later period. Mademoiselle Cruvelli, having received tempting offers from the Grand Opera at Paris, was the first to quit the theatre. When singers were announced who did not sing, and operas advertised which were constantly postponed, the uninitiated public might well shake its head with dissatisfaction and forebodings.

In this troubled crisis of affairs several noblemen and gentlemen, who were the most influential among the friends and well-wishers of Her Majesty's Theatre, convened a meeting of the subscribers to consider the best means of aiding the management to carry on its affairs to the end of the season. The names which were signed to this requisition were of a character to show at once the urgency of the appeal, the honourable feeling of the intention, and the desire to be of service to one whose energy and resolution had already carried him through difficulties under which most managers would, I really think, have succumbed.

The main object of the meeting was to preserve, by guarantee, the theatre from ruin, and also to maintain the direction of affairs in the hands which had hitherto conducted them. Every justice was done on this occasion by all present to my long and zealous exertions, and full testimony was rendered, by the oldest *habitués*, to the distinguished position to which I had raised the theatre. Resolutions were then passed for the adoption of measures which might best effect the object for which this notable meeting was convened. They were in substance as follows:—

"I. That, considering the beneficial influence which Her Majesty's Theatre has exercised for nearly a century in promoting and extending the musical taste of the country, it is desirable that measures should be taken at this meeting to support Her Majesty's Theatre.

"II. That, considering the energy and perseverance which the Director of this establishment has displayed in the cultivation of the highest works of art, and in providing for the public taste and amusement, during a period of extraordinary difficulty, the meeting will support and assist the Director in his efforts to surmount the difficulties of the establishment.

"III. That, with the view of establishing an immediate and available source for the purpose of carrying on and conducting this establishment during the present season, a fund be raised, to which all friends and well-wishers of the theatre be invited to become subscribers, and that a committee be appointed for the purpose of receiving such subscriptions, and applying the same in such a way as they shall deem most conducive to the interests of Her Majesty's Theatre."

In accordance with the last resolution, a committee was appointed for the purpose of receiving subscriptions in support of the establishment, and of regulating the manner in which the sums thus raised should be applied. With these decisions the meeting separated. Subscription lists were opened, and liberally filled. But by this scheme, although the immediate conduct of the performances remained, as heretofore, in the hands of the Director, it was clear that new and less capable influences would soon bear heavily on important arrangements, on which the prosperity of the theatre must necessarily depend.

When this circumstance is taken into consideration, it may reasonably be doubted whether the boon bestowed upon the management was in reality so great as on the face of it might appear. The measures taken by the committee formed in pursuance of the resolutions passed at this meeting, were for the purpose of applying the subscriptions raised as a guarantee for the payment of the current salaries of the orchestra, chorus, and supernumeraries. No provision was thus made for the security of the salaries of the principal artists. These were necessarily left, by this arrangement, to continue to give their services and to accept the chances of remuneration or loss. Without a free co-operation of these artists in the arrangements thus made, it would have been impossible to carry on the theatre one single night. It may thus be said that a great portion of the real and practical management of the establishment had passed into the hands of a committee of noblemen and gentlemen, aided and supported (or not, as the case might be) by the compliance of the principal singers and dancers. The opening thus afforded for remon-

strance, complaints, insubordination, interference, or, in extreme cases, immediate secession, on the part of the salaried *employés* of the theatre, was as unavoidable as it was dangerous.

In the midst of this turmoil and confusion, Madame Lagrange made her first appearance at Her Majesty's Theatre in the "Lucia di Lammermoor." The engagement had been hastily but most judiciously made, when one expected *prima donna* after another seemed to melt into impalpable forms. Madame Lagrange had long enjoyed a great and well-merited reputation on the Continent. The wondrous fluency of her vocalization exercised a great charm upon her audience. But it was in her lighter characters, in *opera buffa*, that she commanded her greatest meed of applause in England, for it was in comedy that she was allowed to excel as an actress. In the "Prova d'una Opera Seria," her neatness of execution completely captivated the audience. In "Don Pasquale" her success was scarcely less. That this singer was a great acquisition to Her Majesty's Theatre cannot be questioned, but she came at an unfortunate moment; and, great as were her merits, it could scarcely be expected that she would be able to bear the whole weight of attraction on her own shoulders or, alone and unaided as she was sure to be, to charm away the heavy spell of disaster. Outside the theatre were distrust and waning popularity; within its walls the unfortunate "arrangement" (adopted in view of the salvation of the establishment) was bearing its inevitable fruits in disaffection and unsteadiness of purpose among the "principals," only serving to plunge the direction into difficulties "deeper and deeper still."

It is afflicting to read, in the official notices of Her

Majesty's Theatre at this period, such records as the following:—

"Mademoiselle Cruvelli, Mademoiselle D'Angri, and Mr. Balfe absented themselves. The performance of the opera of 'Ernani,' with the last act of 'La Cenerentola,' was consequently postponed, and 'Lucia' substituted."

"Mademoiselle Forli refused to dance, although advertised to appear."

"Signor Gardoni refused to sing at seven o'clock. Mr. Allcroft apologized to the audience for the substitution of Bettini, Mr. Harris not being at his post."

"'Lucrezia' postponed; Madame Fiorentini refused to appear. 'Don Pasquale' substituted."

And so forth, *usque ad nauseam*.

Mademoiselle Forli, named above, appeared for one night in "La Sylphide," and, like a sylph, vanished. Her place was supplied by Mademoiselle Fleury, a clever artist; but, although admired and applauded, Mademoiselle Fleury had advanced in her art from noviciate to proficiency too much under the eyes of London, and on the English boards, to be accepted as a "star." Mademoiselle Rosati, who came late in the season accompanied by Monsieur Durand, an accomplished dancer and pantomimist, was received back with enthusiasm. Some little *prestige* was once more gained to the *ballet* by the return of Rosati; but, whatever its influence, it could not replace the tottering fortunes of the theatre upon a solid basis.

About this time, also, a strange rumour fell on the public ear—Mademoiselle Sophie Cruvelli was gone! She had fled abruptly, and without any previous warning! This lady was considered the chief remaining

stay of the theatre, as *prima donna*. She alone appeared to retain some power of attraction to the spell-bound and declining establishment. Several parts had been allotted to her in which her popularity might find occasion to prove itself to advantage. In which of these was she about to appear? The doubt was soon set at rest, and the knot of uncertainty cut at once by the wayward and impulsive young lady herself. On the very day when, in the evening, she was announced to sing the "Lucrezia Borgia," the opera selected for the *début* of the barytone Signor De Bassini (an acquisition of fair promise to the theatre), it transpired that she had set sail for the Continent, and had flown back to her German home. No reason, no word of explanation, no excuse, was afforded by the fugitive herself. It could only be surmised that, with the strange impulsiveness which was one great characteristic of this erratic genius—and which, much as it stood her in good stead in vigour of acting and of style, was but a weak guide in the practical affairs of life—she had suddenly yielded to the sensation of weariness and disgust which assailed her under the uncertainties and difficulties of the season, and had "flung it to the winds" by precipitate flight. Whatever the reason, there could be but little excuse for so flagrant a breach of faith and courtesy. But, at all events, Cruvelli had disappeared; and the subscribers of Her Majesty's Theatre were deprived of their most distinguished favourite of the season.

The unexpected event of Mademoiselle Cruvelli's disappearance compelled me to bring forward the new barytone in the *Figaro* of the "Barbiere," with Madame De Lagrange, whereas he ought to have appeared in one of those powerful tragic parts upon which his great

reputation was materially founded. This circumstance was both unfortunate for Signor De Bassini himself and prejudicial to the theatre. As *Figaro* the impression he made proved very small. It was only afterwards, when he appeared as *De Chevreux* in "Maria di Rohan," that he "won his spurs" on the scenic arena of Her Majesty's Theatre, establishing his right to be considered a singer and actor of high pretensions. But first impressions are fatal enemies, as they are often found to be stout allies. Although entitled to a far greater reputation than most of his predecessors in the same branch of his art, Signor De Bassini scarcely received his due meed of honour. He remained, however, to render most valuable aid in maintaining the fight to the last, when Beletti had quietly, and without any public *éclat*, slid away out of the turmoil of disaster.

The same, too, may be said of Signor Bettini, a tenor, who appeared about the middle of June as *Ernani*. He had already been known in England, and was considered, as a *tenore di forza*, to have a certain merit; but deficient both in sweetness of voice and smoothness of style, he was never a favourite with the London public. Still, his energy exercised a certain sway over his audience; and this singer also, when Gardoni likewise seceded in dissatisfaction and retired, weary of further struggle in the lists, did good service to the management by fighting side by side with Calzolari to the last.*

Thus, likewise, Madame De Lagrange, as has been

* This singer must be distinguished from another of the same name, a tenor of sweet voice and pure style, but with small power, who sang in later seasons (1862–63) at Her Majesty's Theatre, and who is the husband of that very favourite *contralto*, Mademoiselle Trebelli.

already intimated, remained for some time "alone in her glory," the principal support as *prima donna* of the tottering establishment. It must not be supposed, however, that I ceased in my laborious exertions to lure over every available talent to Her Majesty's Theatre, in order to supply, as far as was possible, the places of the stars which had "set."

Hopes were entertained, almost to the closing of the doors for the season, of the reappearance of Madame Sontag. She was still looked to as the *Deus ex machinâ*, who might appear at the last to change the apparently fatal *dénouement* of the drama of management. It has been stated, in a censorious spirit, that her name occasionally appeared "underlined" upon the official announcements of the theatre as likely to appear. Now, Madame Sontag, during the summer, was residing with her family in Germany with the view of recruiting her impaired strength by a course of waters at Ems. Ill health was her sole reason for not resuming her proud position at Her Majesty's Theatre. Deserted by Mademoiselle Wagner, I had once more made a powerful appeal to the great star of previous seasons. Every day I hoped that, her health re-established, and the only impediment to her reappearance removed, Madame Sontag would be able to come over to London. Early in July I once more received glad tidings. A letter, from the Countess Rossi to a distinguished correspondent, had contained a passage to the effect that "if the theatre were to be kept open to the usual period in August, she did not hesitate to authorize him (Mr. Lumley) to announce her for the end of July." Strong in this authorization, I was only too happy to announce the great singer's reappearance. "I trust now," I

wrote to Count Rossi, "that no conceivable impediment will arise. The consequences, particularly after the announcement, would be disastrous." In the same letter I wrote to thank "the Countess for her kind and gracious proposal." Nevertheless, the confidence thus raised was destined to be cruelly shattered. Letters came from Count Rossi, repudiating the sense attached to the communication made by his wife (which he said had been misunderstood), and deprecating the public announcement in the daily prints. It was urged in reply, that in her letter the Countess had said, "*Vous pouvez m'annoncer;*" but whatever might be the true sense of the original words of Madame Sontag, one phrase sufficed to destroy all my hopes: "*Quoiqu'il en soit,*" wrote Count Rossi, in conclusion, "*Madame Sontag est, contre son attente, si épuisée par les eaux, qu'il ne lui est point possible de paraître dans un opéra.*" To such a reason, thus advanced, no reply could be given. The direction of the theatre had to succumb beneath this added disappointment, and the audiences of Her Majesty's Theatre were destined never more to be enraptured by the delightful talent of this exquisite singer.

Madame Sontag was shortly afterwards taken over by Count Rossi, upon an artistic expedition, to the United States, where her success was very great, enabling her to amass a considerable fortune. She succumbed, however, to the climate of Mexico, whither she had been induced to proceed in 1853, and died of inflammation of the lungs after a very few hours' illness. Except on the death of Madame Malibran, never was artist so deeply and so loudly regretted in England as this most estimable lady. Her career in London and Paris (where she appeared as a marvel after her long

retirement) was triumphant. But, great as was her individual success, the fortunes of Her Majesty's Theatre were not much advanced by it. The various sums expended on her and her travelling expeditions were enormous, her own share of remuneration amounting to a total exceeding 20,000*l.*

An effort was made to ameliorate the state of affairs by the production of a new *ballet* for the popular Rosati; and "Zélie, ou l'Amour et la Magie" was "mounted," with considerable scenic display and magnificence of costume and decoration. Rosati exercised all her fascinations of "twinkling feet," graceful pantomime, and personal charm in this *divertissement*—for *ballet d'action*, with its scanty and yet confused plot, it could scarcely be called—and, in conjunction with the splendours of the "scenery and appointments," elicited the usual amount of exuberant applause from the *habitués* of the theatre. But still "Zélie," with all its brilliancy of illustrative art, in every form, can scarcely be said to have sensibly arrested the falling fortunes of the establishment.

Madame De Lagrange worked hard, and in some degree effectively, to maintain the popularity of the theatre, performing in a variety of favourite operas. But it was impossible for Madame De Lagrange, as has been already intimated, to sustain so great a burthen unassisted. Other resources had to be sought, and, under the pressure of some of my patrons, Mademoiselle Favanti was brought forward. This young lady (whose real name was Edwards), had made her *début* on the same boards, it will be remembered, as far back as the year 1844, but had failed in establishing that position which her friends and admirers asserted

was her due. She appeared once more in her original trial-part of "La Cenerentola," but without creating any more favourable sensation among the great majority of her hearers. That this lady was endowed with a voice of extensive compass and considerable volume is unquestionable; but the defects attending her first essay were still present to mar her efforts—a great uncertainty of intonation, a want of refinement in those executive passages which she was able to master, and an ill-directed energy shown in attempting audacious *tours de force* which she had not the ability to carry out.

Other resources were still to be sought, and were found at last in the person of Madame Charton.

This lady, already advantageously known in England, and celebrated in Paris as the original heroine of some of Auber's most charming operas, was a decided acquisition under the circumstances. Without any great degree of power either in voice or style of acting, she gilded all she sang with so bright a halo of ease, finish, and consummate grace, that she could not fail to be at once accepted as an accomplished artist. The *rôle de début* was one of the most hazardous that could be attempted on the boards she trod. That in Her Majesty's Theatre she should appear as *Amina* in "La Sonnambula," to confront the memory of this or that beloved *Amina* of that place, was in itself a trying venture. By her exquisite execution, and her valuable experience as an actress of the superior French school, she triumphed, not only over her own want of power, but over all reminiscences and rivalry. Her success was decidedly great. It was generally understood, however, that it was for one especial purpose that this artist had been engaged, and that, although she had assumed her

privilege to choose her *rôle d'entrée*, it was in a new opera, respecting which rumours had long been current, that she was principally to appear. Until this opera, which from its very nature was calculated to excite an unusual curiosity, was ready for production, a sop was thrown to that impatient Cerberus, the public, in the shape of another new *ballet divertissement*, "La Bouquetière," the composition of Madame Guy Stephan, in which that pleasant *danseuse*, assisted by Monsieur Durand, enlivened many an evening.

It was natural to expect that some excitement would be created respecting "a grand romantic opera" (already announced in the prospectus of the season), "the music by his Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Saxe Coburg and Gotha." Not only would a legitimate curiosity be aroused to witness the representation of a work composed by so illustrious an amateur, of whose distinction as a musician so much had been already bruited forth to the world; but when it was considered that this sovereign-artist was the brother-in-law of England's Queen, the brother of the Prince Consort, there could be little doubt that the curiosity roused would become double in intensity. The work, moreover, was known to have been represented ("and with considerable success," the popular report added) on several of the best operatic stages in Germany, among which were two of the highest rank, those of Vienna and Munich. Reliance, then, was fairly to be placed upon the attraction likely to be created by a work comprising so many elements of interest.

"Casilda" was performed "for the first time in England," on Thursday, the 5th August. It was listened to by a crowded house; it was frequently

applauded. To state that it was condemned would be unjust; but the success of the work, such as it was, may be fairly pronounced, in polite French phrase, a "*succès de courtoisie.*" The best quality predicable of it consisted in the carefulness discernible in the whole orchestral treatment of the work. The instrumentation was skilful, varied, and well contrasted; treated, too, with a "tact" deemed worthy the attention of musicians, and adapted to lead the audience on to listen with complacent patience, if not with actual pleasure, to what must be termed its generally meagre melodies. Merit of the first order had not, perhaps, been expected; much originality even may not have been hoped for by the many who crowded to Her Majesty's Theatre on this occasion. But the want of decided and intelligible form in the various vocal pieces, of striking rhythm, and of salient character, was severely felt by the audience, inspired though they were by a sentiment of indulgence the most forbearing. In the story of the *libretto* moreover, there were no effects which in a dramatic point of view could kindle the feelings of the audience when the music failed to warm the heart or excite the imagination. Nothing was positively objectionable or even wearying, but on the other hand nothing was there calculated to arouse attention or to command applause.

Madame Charton, in the principal part of *Casilda*, Madame De Lagrange in a secondary *rôle*, Calzolari, and De Bassini, all exerted themselves to the utmost to give the best effect to music in which they had little hope of shining to advantage. Every support that gorgeous scenery, characteristic costumes, and ingenious groupings in the *ensemble* of the choruses could bestow on the work as attractive accessories, had been lavishly squandered

to do honour to the Grand Ducal opera. But beyond one night's excitement, when curiosity had been allayed, it was manifest to all accustomed to feel the pulse of the public that "Casilda" could not possibly "draw;" nor could the treasury reap advantage from its maintenance in the bills, even when there was no other form of novelty available and nothing but "stock" operas to fall back upon. Nay, more! it was evident, in short, that this last "forlorn hope" of attraction having ended its brief career almost with its birth, nothing remained but to succumb resignedly to baleful influences which, during the whole season, had shed discouragement and trouble upon the theatre, and to close its doors. And accordingly, after a few struggling nights (over and above the subscription), a performance of "Don Giovanni," for the benefit of Mr. Balfe the conductor (on which occasion two unsuccessful *débutantes* were permitted to appear), and one "farewell night," of no especial brilliancy, the portals of Her Majesty's Theatre were closed; and with this painful record terminates the dismal history of the season of 1852.

The countless embarrassments following upon my unfortunate venture in undertaking the direction of the Parisian Italian Opera, combined with the unexpected impediments thrown in the way of the management of Her Majesty's Theatre during the season of 1852, had placed me in a position of peculiar uneasiness. Actions at law menaced me on all sides, both in London and in Paris. No sooner was one threatened danger thrust aside than another arose, and anon another! in hydra-headed succession. Still my fortitude never failed me.

CHAPTER XXII.

Schemes for renovating the Prosperity of the Opera—An "Association" contemplated, to carry it on as a Joint-stock Company—Difficulty of legalizing such an Association—The Earl Dudley—His first Connexion with the Theatre—His Lordship and Sir Ralph Howard step forward to prevent the Dispersion of the "Properties"—Indications afforded of Lord Dudley's views, viz., of taking the Management of the Opera—Negociations opened with leading Artists accordingly—Alarmed by the Conduct of the principal Creditors, Lord Dudley renounces the Design—Retrospect of the embarrassing Course of Affairs during previous Year—Intolerable Hardship of the Legal Persecution—Efforts made to obtain possession of "Her Majesty's Theatre" by Mr. Gye—Mr. Benedict's Views on the Theatre—Abandoned on account of the Complexity of its Obligations—The Theatre remains Closed from 1852 to 1856—Covent Garden Opera House Burnt down, March, 1856—My Return to London—Revival of Her Majesty's Theatre—I resume the Direction of the Opera—Controlling Authority exercised by Lord Dudley, now become the principal Creditor of the Establishment—Necessity compels me to part with my Lease to my noble Patron—Reluctance mitigated by the Assurances of Lord Dudley's Resolution to take no Advantage of his Position—Lord Dudley Underlets the Theatre for a Term of Years—Harassing Litigation—Final Appeal of the vexatious Ejectment Suit pending in the House of Lords—Anxious Situation prior to the Reopening of the Theatre in 1856.

WHATEVER efforts may be made to garnish everyday life—the life of practical realities and positive cares—with the colours of romance, and to shed over its dulness

even the faintest halo of poetry, it is utterly impossible to sweep it clear of the cobwebs which the ever-intruding law spins in every available corner, even in its most sacred recesses. The highest and lowest alike must submit to its intrusion. Its constant presence may be ignored in pleasant times: in days of embarrassment and perplexity it rules supreme, with all-absorbing influence. Such poetry of feeling as may attach itself to art, and artists, consequently, must for a time be obscured by its shadows. Legal details, connected with the fortunes of Her Majesty's Theatre, thrust themselves into such prominence at this period of its history that it is impossible to avoid giving them first and full attention.

In the impending crisis of the fortunes of the theatre I had, early in the harassing season of 1852, conceived the plan of forming an association for the purpose of carrying on the affairs of the opera house—in other words, a joint-stock company to undertake the financial and speculative portion of the direction, whilst the management remained in the same hands. It was very evident that, owing to a series of untoward circumstances (and especially to the breakdown of the Paris enterprise), Her Majesty's Theatre was gradually succumbing; and the plan was conceived for the purpose of raising a sufficient sum, in shares, to clear the theatre from its liabilities, pay off the sums originally borrowed upon some of the "property" boxes, as they are called, and restore the famous "old house," freed from all incumbrances and hindrances, to eventual prosperity. In this design I was warmly and powerfully assisted by many influential noblemen and gentlemen. At that time, however, the "Limited Liability" Bill had not passed, and it was

discovered that, under the law of partnership as it then stood, it would be almost impracticable to arrive at any definite measures. Hence it was deemed advisable, and indeed indispensable, to appeal in the usual form for a "Charter," to establish the association without incurring the dangers of unlimited liability. Opinions favourable to the project of a Royal Charter were obtained from the highest legal authorities, among which was that of Lord Lyndhurst; and armed with such powerful sanction, I pursued my efforts to obtain, in the proper quarters, the desired support to the incorporation of the Opera Association. The project having been bruited abroad, considerable opposition to the scheme was displayed in some of the papers, known to be in the interests of the rival establishment. A cry of attempt at monopoly was raised, as against all the principles of free-trade, in a "free-trade" age and country. The logic of the arguments advanced on the occasion was not, however, by any means apparent.

During the course of these active exertions (the episodes relating to which might fill a volume, could the story of the struggle between the two administrations, of the Government and of the Opera, be considered worth narration *in extenso*), I had an interview with Mr. Cardwell, then Vice-President of the Board of Trade. By this gentleman I was listened to with the most exemplary patience, and my arguments apparently met with assent. Mr. Cardwell, indeed, reminded me on this occasion of the stout Tory gentleman of another generation who, in speaking of the eloquence of Charles Fox, remarked, "He certainly has often convinced my judgment, but, I am proud to say, he has never influenced my vote." The petitioner was obliged to depart from

the interview without any promise, and eventually the Royal Charter was decidedly refused.

The next course adopted was to obtain an Act of Parliament for the incorporation of the company. A Bill, to meet the exigencies of the occasion, was accordingly brought into the House, and it was soon made known to the public that "Her Majesty's Theatre Association Bill had passed the Standing Orders Committee" early in the year 1853. But on the second reading, Mr. Cardwell, contrary to expectation (inasmuch as he was supposed to have sanctioned the appeal to Parliament), spoke against the Bill with much energy. The Bill was lost, and all hopes of re-establishing the fortunes of Her Majesty's Theatre by the proposed "Association" fell to the ground.

Considerable opposition was offered to the Bill on account of some informality which had taken place in passing it through the "Committee on Standing Orders." It had been urged that, if the form were not dispensed with, the delay in bringing in the Bill would prevent the theatre from opening that year (1853). It was on the discussion of this point that one honourable member declared that the very argument would be a conclusive reason for insisting on the "order," inasmuch as it would be a good thing if *all* theatres were closed (!)

By the refusal of a Charter, and by the loss of the Bill for the incorporation of the Opera Association, all the arrangements looked forward to for the opening of Her Majesty's Theatre for the season of 1853 were at once annulled. Was it possible to commence a fresh campaign under the pressing difficulties of the moment, or

was it not? Such were the various and harassing questions debated.

In this emergency it was that the Earl of Dudley (then Lord Ward), afterwards destined to be so immediately connected with the fortunes of Her Majesty's Theatre, appeared on the scene of the perplexed and tangled drama which was being enacted. This nobleman had taken a somewhat prominent part in the famous committee meeting of the previous season, when he had volunteered the pledge that, under no circumstances would he desert me or the Opera, and it would seem probable that it was at this period that his Lordship conceived the idea of becoming himself the Director of Her Majesty's Theatre, in actual practical working, but under the cover of my name, and with the aid of my long experience. It cannot be presumed that it was in any spirit of financial speculation that this design was conceived by Lord Ward. But when it is felt how great is the fascination that the management of theatres, and especially of an operatic establishment, exercises over many minds, it may well be understood how very powerful was the temptation to lay hands on the operatic sceptre, which lay ready to the grasp.

Special circumstances rendered immediate action necessary. The "properties" of the theatre were announced for sale, upon a claim of the ground landlord, who in the year 1850 had advanced on this security the sum of 10,000*l*. To prevent the dispersion of these valuable theatrical accessories, the original cost of which had been valued at 23,000*l*., it was arranged that they should be purchased, in the names of Lord Ward and Sir Ralph Howard (the latter gentleman shortly after

resigning his share in this item of property to the nobleman), upon security afforded by me.

Thus it came to pass that, in the early portion of 1853, when it was still considered possible to open Her Majesty's Theatre for its customary season, Lord Ward still adhered to his purpose of carrying on the speculation as his own. Negociations, under his auspices, were conducted with various artists. Madame Viardot, Lablache, Gardoni, Massol, and Coletti, were all included in them, the artists having been respectively "sounded," nay, partially engaged. Directions were given that the theatre should be held ready to open at a moment's notice. But in consequence of some difficulties interposed by the principal creditors, Lord Ward suddenly abandoned his project, and threw up all the arrangements, although these were far advanced.

The die, then, was cast, and Her Majesty's Theatre remained with closed doors during the season of 1853, being destined by events which followed in fatal succession not to open those doors again to the public until the year 1856.

It may as well be stated at once, that the main cause of Her Majesty's Theatre remaining closed during these three consecutive seasons arose from the wearisome delays attendant upon the fact of an action of ejectment having been brought against myself. The action was instituted, in the name of the ground landlord, by his brother, a barrister, upon the plea that a violation of the terms of the lease had been committed by the lessee. This pretended "violation" could only be supported by a highly-strained interpretation of the law. Nevertheless, the vexatious suit was carried on through years.

The legal points were first decided in my favour by the Court of Queen's Bench, and again, when the cause was carried over to the Court of Exchequer Chamber, that judgment was confirmed, though not until the month of November, 1855. An appeal was then made to the House of Lords, and there at last I was relieved of this legal "Old Man of the Sea," who had so long clung round my neck, encumbering, stifling, strangling me at every turn—an unanimous and final decision confirming the previous judgments.

During all this long period of harassing doubt, expense, and anxiety, while the weight of the deadly incubus rendered it impossible for me, however impatient I might feel under inaction, to attempt carrying on the affairs of the theatre, I passed my time partially in Paris, winding up various obligations resulting from the unfortunate campaigns I had undertaken in the field of Italian Opera.

It must not be supposed, however, that during all this long period the interests of Her Majesty's Theatre were allowed to remain altogether in abeyance. Efforts were made, though without effect, to obtain possession of Her Majesty's Theatre on the part of the lessee of Covent Garden. At one time (early in the spring of 1854) a strong idea was entertained by Mr. Benedict, the celebrated composer, of taking the theatre under his own direction, and on this subject he and I had several interviews. He was a popular man, supported by many influential personages in his project, and the occasion seemed promising. But he seems to have recoiled before the overwhelming difficulties and heavy responsibilities of the undertaking; for, after a few months of

fruitless negociations, he eventually abandoned the design. And that he acted wisely I most emphatically declare. A professional musician is out of place in the position of a director. He is too apt to be guided by professional prejudices. I do not believe there is a single instance of a professional man having been successful in an operatic enterprise, while there are many examples of the contrary, such as those of Catalani at Paris, Lablache in Sicily, and Persiani at Covent Garden. It is scarcely possible for a composer not to fail in the practical management of individuals. He would be constantly led in the wrong direction by professional prepossessions or aversions.

Another aspirant for the honours of the direction also appeared, during the same year, in the person of Mr. E. T. Smith, best known in the theatrical world by his long lesseeship of Drury Lane Theatre. But after many interviews and calculations it became evident that the ambitious hopes of this enterprising speculator could not be realized, at least for the present.

In after years, when my connexion with Her Majesty's Theatre was entirely broken, Mr. E. T. Smith became for a short period the Director of the establishment. But his boldness did not command success on this occasion, and the failure of the enterprise led to his receding from the lesseeship of Drury Lane also.

To enter into minute details of all the fluctuating circumstances and the legal complications which swayed my fortunes, and through me those of Her Majesty's Theatre, during these three years, while the establishment remained closed to the public, would be impossible. Indeed, this period, interesting only to those who can-

find pleasure in tracing the shiftings and windings of the law, must be passed over, and the history of my management accordingly recommences in the early spring of the year 1856.

On the 4th of March, 1856, I found myself in Paris, arranging multifarious matters of business in that capital. My intention had been to stay for some time longer, and I had even made many engagements for the ensuing week. But on that day I felt unaccountably restless and uneasy. An uncontrollable impulse seemed to urge me to return to London. I reasoned with myself upon the fallacy of such "presentiments," but my self-created arguments against yielding to the impulse which tormented me proved insufficient to check a sudden resolve to return to England. I packed up my "personals" hastily, and started for London by the evening mail. On the morning of the 5th of March I arrived in town. I proceeded at once direct from the railway to the office of one of my legal agents (situate near to London Bridge), and was there startled by the announcement made by one of the clerks, that Covent Garden Theatre had been burned down during the night!*

Hurrying to my friends, I learned that telegraphic despatches had been sent off to me at Paris from a dozen quarters. Curious that a strange "presentiment" should have already brought me back! On all

* This catastrophe, it will be remembered, took place at the conclusion of a masked ball, given by the "Wizard Anderson." The fire burst out even before the company had left the house, and hundreds of "masks" escaped from the rapidly invading fire, rushing with terror and shrieks into the streets.

sides I found my friends in a state of the utmost agitation and excitement. The destruction of the rival establishment had changed, as if by the wave of a magic wand, the whole aspect of my affairs. All crowded around me with offers of assistance, in order to enable me to commence at once active measures for the re-opening of Her Majesty's Theatre. Relieved from the fatal rivalry which had ultimately obtained the mastery, after having for years divided the operatic world, Her Majesty's Theatre might again, it was felt, look forward to a career of prosperity. At all events, the establishment could sail forth upon a new venture with far less chance of those sources of disaster which arose in the one formidable quarter. By this one event difficulties appeared to have shrunk into nothing. What in men's eyes had been mountains now appeared mole-hills. A "friendly hand" came forward to smooth the way before the new enterprise. Interview followed interview with all the patrons and supporters of Her Majesty's Theatre, and it was powerfully urged that every possible step should be taken for the immediate opening of the establishment.

But although there was much appearance of hope in the future, and although I again saw the sceptre of management brought within my reach, it must not be supposed that all difficulties, however they might be lightened, were wholly disposed of. Proposals were again made for Her Majesty's Theatre by the lessee of the unfortunate establishment which was now in ruins. But he found me too strong in the field already, and learned that, in spite of encumbrances, the obstacles could be met by energy, not unaccompanied with confidence in the

future. After many days of suspense, negociation, opposition, every adverse contingency seemed well-nigh surmounted; and accordingly, on Wednesday, the 19th March, the momentous decision was taken that the theatre should open for the season of 1856!

In all the preliminary steps to this important event, it must naturally be inferred, from the situation of affairs as detailed at the commencement of the chapter, that the ruling spirit in all the arrangements, financial and legal, was Lord Ward; and, in order to present a clear conception of the true position of the Director of Her Majesty's Theatre during ensuing seasons down to the close of his management, it will be necessary once more to refer to the past, and to explain through what steps, during the intervening years, the framework was prepared of that special and exceptional basis upon which Her Majesty's Theatre now rested.

It was manifest that, although Lord Ward had long since abandoned his idea of taking the main practical direction of the theatre upon himself, he had nevertheless always maintained the design of bringing its general affairs under his own control. To this intent he purposed to gather into his own hands all the various encumbrances (chiefly in the form of "judgments") which weighed upon the establishment. One after another these were bought up by him, until (with one single exception, as it would appear) he became the possessor of every "charge" of any notable amount to which the property was liable. Well aware as I was that it would not always be beneficial to an encumbered property that every claim should lie in the power of one individual,

still, placing reliance on the noble patron, and disposed to look upon him as a friend to art, chiefly for its own sake, I did all in my power to forward Lord Ward's views, insomuch that at the period when all arrangements were ripe for the re-opening of the theatre for the season of 1856, Lord Ward had acquired a far larger interest in the theatre than the proprietor himself.

It was natural enough, under the circumstances, that the nobleman, however wealthy, who had advanced moneys so considerable in amount upon the property, should desire to be placed in a more secure position than that of a mere judgment creditor; and Lord Ward accordingly pressed for an absolute assignment of the property to himself, with the understanding that this transaction should be considered in the light of a mortgage. However anxious I felt to please the man whose aid to the theatre had been so valuable and effective, I felt reluctant to part, even in seeming, with my remaining interest in the house—an interest still of such value that Lord Ward himself had offered 10,000*l.* for its acquisition. I was, in truth, unwilling to deprive myself of the chances of developing my property for my own ultimate benefit. A compromise was therefore effected, which seemed to afford security to the noble creditor, and yet leave opportunities to the Director to re-establish his shaken fortunes. It was ultimately agreed that the lease of the theatre should be assigned to the nobleman, on the understanding that I should be allowed to repurchase it whenever it was in my power to do so, and that an under-lease should be granted me, at a rent sufficient to cover the interest on the encumbrances, and

provide at the same time a sinking fund, wherewith to pay off the principal of my debts at the expiration of my lease.

That I hesitated to alienate a property, upon which my whole future fortune depended, is easy to conceive. Still, although I knew I was placing myself wholly in the power of my all-powerful creditor (should my success not prove such as to enable me to pay off these heavy burdens), I relied upon the reputation of Lord Ward, as an amateur and patron of art, and a friend of Her Majesty's Theatre, as affording a security against any dangerous consequences. Any lingering doubts I might have felt, moreover, were gradually dispersed by the frank assurances and even written pledges of his lordship.* Thus, although fully aware that I was granting my noble creditor unlimited power over my destiny, I finally assented to Lord Ward's proposal, without even making an attempt to stipulate for any pecuniary consideration in return for the surrender of a property for which Lord Ward himself had shortly before been anxious to give a large sum.

Legal arrangements were consequently entered into on my part to give due effect to Lord Ward's proposal. All my interest in the lease was assigned over, absolutely, to the nobleman. An under-lease of the theatre was granted to me for a period of four years and three-

* In a letter, dated 17th March, 1856, Lord Ward repeats to me—"I think you may safely put yourself *unreservedly* into my hands as friendly ones." In the same letter he writes that, even in case I should be unable to pay off the existing claims against the estate in the stipulated time, and it should be necessary to deal with them absolutely, "I will not exact my 'pound of flesh;' but will deal liberally with yourself."

quarters, at a stipulated rent;* which included also the use of the properties previously purchased conjointly by his lordship and Sir Ralph Howard; and a deed of covenant was entered into by Lord Ward, by which he bound himself not to sell the theatre or properties before Christmas, 1860; leaving to me the option to re-purchase the theatre at the price of 38,820*l.*, the sum calculated as the actual amount of my creditors' securities at the period specified.

The deeds were executed, and my fate was decided. For the present, at least, a load was taken from my mind, whatever may have been my misgivings respecting a dark and hazardous future. These "misgivings" were, unfortunately, not confined at that time to the result of my transactions with Lord Ward, or even to my chances for good or for evil of the revived operatic speculation. At this very juncture, the litigation at the suit of the superior landlord, with the view of obtaining a forfeiture, was pending. The decisions hitherto given had been entirely in my favour, as has been already stated; but in the commencement of 1856 the dangers incident to the Appeal to the House of Lords still menaced me.

Such was the footing upon which the fortunes of the establishment rested when Her Majesty's Theatre at last re-opened its doors for the season of 1856. Such

* The amount of the rent was fixed at 3344*l.* 14*s.* for the first year, and 6275*l.* per annum for the rest of the term. These sums were calculated as the interest payable to Lord Ward in respect of his advances (including the price of the "properties" purchased, to which was to be joined a sum of 2400*l.*, supposed to represent the amount of the annual sinking fund, to be applied to paying off the principal at the end of the term of the lease). By an error of calculation, this sum of 2400*l.* had been put considerably too high, as was admitted in subsequent discussions.

were the auspices under which the *rénaissance* took place; such the doubts, the difficulties, the hazards, which lay before the Director, like rocks in the channel way of a ship—some clear above the surface, others sunken and hidden beneath the waters. The pilot of Her Majesty's Theatre, however, had confidence in his "good stout ancient bark;" and looked forward with trust to steer her steadily into the haven of safety, possibly into that of success.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Hasty Preparations for Re-opening Her Majesty's Theatre—Mdlle. Johanna Wagner engaged again—Surprise consequent upon this Announcement—Effective Character of the new "Company"—The Director's "Address" issued to the Subscribers and the Public—The Opening Night in May described—General Satisfaction of the Patrons of the Opera with the Renewed Activity of the Management—Mournful Absence of Lablache, struck by Mortal Sickness—Alboni's Return—*Début* of Mdlle. Piccolomini—Her Remarkable Position on the Stage—Her Great Success—Marie Taglioni, MM. Charles and Vauders in *Ballet*—*Début* of Mdlle. Wagner in "Romeo"—Her Merits, what?—Successful Course of Affairs—Durable Attraction of Piccolomini—Anecdotes of Lablache.

THE spring of the year 1856 was already advanced, and but scanty was the time for preparation. With the hopes of a brighter future before me, my energy and activity were fully employed. Taking Paris principally as my head-quarters, I cast out my nets on every side to catch the largest operatic fish which might be afloat in theatrical waters. It was necessary, doubtless, to gild the baits expensively in order to capture the best; but hasty as were the whole proceedings, the "haul" was an unusually fine one, and, considering the circumstances, most extraordinary.

So much had been said lately about a flying fish of the most brilliant colours, that had been disporting itself, "to the delight of all beholders," in Italian latitudes, that

the most tempting lures were thrown out in this especial direction. It was a bold venture; for I had learned by experience that the most gorgeous southern hues do not always look so bright when divested of the rainbow tints of Italian imagination and exposed to the rays of our British light. It *was* a bold venture—but the fisherman persevered. The coy fish looked at the bait, turned tail, and swam away. The bait was changed to one more attractive: the fish returned, sported around it, nibbled, swallowed it; and Marietta Piccolomini was "hooked" at last for Her Majesty's Theatre!

A surprise, moreover, awaited the subscribers and the public—a great surprise, at all events, to those who knew nothing of the proverbial unsteadiness and changeableness of theatrical curiosities.* Rumour began to assert that I was in treaty with my former slippery "subject," Mademoiselle Johanna Wagner. Outsiders shook their

* A still greater surprise lay among the possibilities of the season, although it never came before the public. Before it was known that the Lyceum was to be opened for Italian Opera by the late management of the unfortunate Covent Garden, I had addressed Signor Costa with proposals to become my conductor.

"I know your attachment to the old house," I wrote. "Her Majesty's Theatre is about to re-open. Such an occasion—the commencement of a new era in its history—might be considered by yourself, as it would be by all, most propitious for rejoining a theatre wherein your great reputation was acquired. To me it would be gratifying to see you resume your old post. Judging of your feelings by my own, I am sure that anything which a moment's misintelligence rendered unpleasant in the past, will be entirely forgotten."

To this proposal Mr. Costa replied as follows:—

"My dear Sir,—I am happy to see you have found [Query, where does this appear?] that I was the straightforward and the best friend of your interests and of Her Majesty's Theatre. At present Mr. Gye has my word; and you well know my word is a bond. If anything should happen in future, I will be glad to treat with you."

And thus terminated this singular little episode in operatic annals.

heads doubtfully. "Impossible! It could not be!" Rumour, however, was right for once.

Indirect assurances had been given to me that Mademoiselle Wagner was anxious to come to terms, and appear at Her Majesty's Theatre, provided she could be released from the penalties of the infraction of her engagement on the previous occasion. On the basis of these assurances I resolved to make overtures of "peace and good will" to my former deserter. There was no time for long negociations. Principally through the mediation of Paul Taglioni, then professionally engaged at Berlin, and by telegraphic dispatches, the affair was brought to a conclusion. Some doubt still lingered in the lady's mind, arising not from any suspicion of the entire sincerity of my offers of reconciliation and engagement, but, as it afterwards appeared, from her own fears as to the disposition of a British public towards her, after the insolent (but oft-repented) letter of her father, with the ignorant phrase, "England is only to be valued for her gold." The risk, however, was worth encountering, and Mademoiselle Wagner's engagement at Her Majesty's Theatre for the season of 1856 was concluded.*

From my Parisian head-quarters I spread out my feelers on all sides, and collected a good company around

* In her correspondence she made constant reference to the wretched affair of 1852. "*Croyez moi, je serai fidèle à ma parole et à vous jusqu'au dernier moment;*" and again, "*J'espère qu'il*" (the new contract) "*effaçera avec ses conséquences tout le passé pour toujours. Quant à moi, je ferai mon possible pour obtenir ce resultat; et quant à vous, je suis persuadée, que vous ferez tout pour me soutenir, et me faire aimer votre belle Angleterre.*" The last words again reveal her doubts as to her reception. The lady was very anxious to sing the "*Orphée*" of Glück. "*Mon plus beau rôle,*" she says; "*mon plus grand succès.*"

me with much expedition. Early in March all had been dark as chaos. In a few short weeks an admirably combined troop was formed, perfect in all its several members. *Ballet*, with its hundred accessories, besides Opera, was to be provided for. Rosati, then dancing in Paris at the *Académie Impériale*, was not only ready to return to London as soon as she was able, but was an excellent adjunct. "*Je suis toujours la même*," she smilingly responded to the resuscitated manager's first application. Gosselin, the clever *mime* and *maître de danse*, undertook the further organization of the choreographic department. Beletti was hunted up, and found willing to return to his old post. An important negociation with Baucardé and his wife, Madame Albertini, who was then enjoying an immense reputation in Italy, especially in Florence, and was strongly recommended on all sides, was concluded to mutual satisfaction. My life in Paris at this period was one of incessant toil and constant "wear and tear" of mind. In the strain upon my bodily and mental resources I was supported by hope as well as a native energy, and I happily came unscathed out of all my difficulties; returning to England with my arrangements for the opening of Her Majesty's Theatre so far completed in all essential points as to warrant the sending forth my prospectus for the season, not without just confidence and pride.

The "Address to the Public," which had been corrected and emended by Lord Ward, was simple and to the purpose, and was hailed with the greatest favour on all sides. The arrangements "already completed" were considered admirable. More were promised. "In con-

sequence of the late period at which it was resolved to open the theatre," said the address, "the arrangements, satisfactory as it is hoped they will even now be found, are not fully completed; and negociations are in progress from which important accessions are expected." But these hopes for the future were scarcely needed in a prospectus which comprised Mademoiselle Piccolomini, Madame Alboni, Mademoiselle Johanna Wagner, and Madame Albertini, together with a host of other minor stars, including Salviani, a new tenor of repute, with Baucardé, Calzolari, Beneventano (a baritone of fair quality), and Zucconi, a *basso buffo*, with the staunch old favourite, Beletti. To these were added, in the *ballet* department, one of the most admired "*étoiles de la danse*," Rosati, surrounded by a host of bewitching satellites; and another star, who bade fair to attain a high place in the favour of the public, viz., Marie Taglioni. Under the auspicious promise of this combination (a marvellous one when the brief time for preparation, and the hurriedness of the arrangements are considered), Her Majesty's Theatre once more prepared to open its doors. The bass voices, which had hitherto constituted one of my strongest points, were the weakest elements in this combination. Alas! the great Lablache, the invaluable old friend and support of Her Majesty's Theatre, the colossal artist (as artist), the cherished of all opera-goers, was lying sick in mortal illness. All that could be done to supply his place had been done. Bouché, an excellent *basso* from the *Académie Impériale*, was subsequently added.

When this important opening at last took place on Saturday the 10th May, the enthusiasm surpassed expectation even in the minds of the most sanguine friends

of the establishment. Public and press seemed both resolved to hold a great jubilee on the occasion. Once more the old arcades and passages, gloomy and deserted for nearly four years, were lighted and thronged with crowds in bright attire; once more the brilliant decorations of the interior blazed forth in all their splendour; once more the high-born and elegant members of society assembled within those familiar walls; once more boxes, stalls, and pit were enlivened by the various colours of dresses and gay "toilettes" and floral wreaths. Old frequenters of the theatre—many who believed in no other opera, and ignored the innovation of rivalry—enjoyed cheerful meetings and greetings in the old "rendezvous" of fashion. Men there were who, radiant with pleasure at finding themselves in the "old house" once more, could scarcely refrain from shaking hands in congratulation with unknown neighbours. Even the partisans of the "other house" came there to indulge their curiosity. Had the whole theatre been sprinkled with waters drawn from the "*Fontaine de Jouvence?*" The old subscribers must have felt something like the sultan of the eastern tale, who, on plunging his head into a bucket of water lived through long years; and yet, on withdrawing it, learned that he had only passed one second. Amid the general complacency none seemed inclined to ask, "What has been done with those three years of operatic life of which we have been robbed?" Friends and patrons of the theatre had "come to their own again." Her Majesty's Theatre awakened to an animated resurrection. It was characterized by all the life and stir of olden times—it re-echoed with its wonted sounds. The chief authority, too, who had ruled its

destinies through long years was still there—no ghost of the past, but the same living man, active, enterprising, unquenched in spirit and in zeal, as of yore. The evening of the resuscitation could not even pass over without a bestowal of public congratulation on the old friend who had struggled with so many difficulties, had suffered in the fire of misfortune, and now rose like a Phœnix from his ashes. I was compelled to appear before the crowded audience, and to accept a burst of enthusiasm to cheer me on the threshold of my new venture.*

The services of Madame Alboni ("her first appearance for five years") had been secured for the opening of the theatre; and the opera given was "La Cenerentola." No part was probably better suited to this wonderful singer's resources; and her reappearance was hailed with the most fervent acclamations. Her voice may have already lost something of that remarkable "velvety" quality which had belonged to it in former days—less through the "wear and tear" of time, however, than through its having been exercised in latter years in singing *soprano* parts, whilst its original quality was a pure *contralto*. But there she stood again, the true exponent of that school of broad, graceful "Cantilena," united with easy fluency—that school of brilliant and unerring execution, the "Rossinian school" (as the phrase went then) which had earned for her the fame she deservedly enjoyed. There she stood again to warble those extraordinary *tours de force*, to which her seeming

* If there was any slight feeling of dissatisfaction to mar the general joy of the occasion, it arose from the arrangement which had deprived Mr. Balfe of his old *bâton* of command as conductor. It is but fair, however, to Signor Bonetti, who supplied his place, to state that on this jubilee occasion he was received—as indeed everybody was—with applause.

unconsciousness of difficulty added so indefinable a charm. There she stood again, the Queen of the Night, on an evening so important, and so remarkable in the history of Her Majesty's Theatre. Calzolari, another so-called "Rossinian" singer, steady as well as accomplished, and an excellent tenor of *agilità*, though not *di forza*, was also warmly welcomed back to his old arena of favour.* Beletti, the favourite baritone of former days, was to have been the *Dandini* of the occasion; but indisposition prevented him from sharing in the glories of that night. Beneventano was obliged to supply his place "at the briefest notice." It was unfortunate for this singer that he should have been forced by circumstances to appear for the first time on the Anglo-Italian stage in a part for which he was unsuited. His strength, such as it was, lay wholly in *opera seria*. But, in doing his best, he preserved the *ensemble* of the opera, in a musical point of view, and met with the due appreciation of a self-sacrifice rarely submitted to by the susceptible tribe of artists.

In one respect the opera of "La Cenerentola," well suited as it was in other ways, could not but awaken a feeling of sadness which ever and anon mingled with the predominant sentiments of joy. The *Don Magnifico*, whom all had known and greeted as a friend, and loved for many long, long years, was there no longer. Recollections of the bursts of laughter which hailed every

* The presence of mind, as well as imperturbable steadiness of this excellent tenor (never perhaps so much appreciated as his merit deserved) was evidenced on this occasion. When he was to appear in the court-garb of the Prince, a considerable delay took place. On entering he was received with a few tokens of disapprobation; so on commencing his recitative, instead of delivering the words set down he quietly sang—"*I miei costumi non eran' pronti:*" and the sibillations immediately changed to laughter and applause.

genial sally of the great *buffo*, so familiar to that stage, fell upon many a heart with a sort of chill. The "*Segreto d'importanza*," so often awaited in old days, when men garnered up their joyousness for a hearty explosion in that scene, wonderful for comic force of acting as well as singing, was rather dreaded as a painful reviver of bygone memories. Where was the dear old *Don Magnifico*, with his importance, his pomposity, his overstrained ambition, and his consternation and despair at the downfal of his hopes? "Sick unto death." Where was the thunder of that mighty voice which had so often pealed through that area as musician-like in truth and skill, as instinct with power? Silent! Lablache was to sing no more!

It was a hard and thankless task for poor Signor Zucconi, on his first appearance, to encounter recollections such as these. Children cannot be made to receive a stepfather in lieu of him whom they have loved and lost, even should the substitute be the worthiest of men. Poor Signor Zucconi! With a voice of no great compass, he laboured hard to move his audience by an exuberance of grotesque humour, common to the Italian *buffo;* but his audience could not be induced to laugh. What could he do, save fail? To resume the thread of our story.

Not only in opera, but in the *ballet* department also, the ancient glories of Her Majesty's Theatre were to be revived on that memorable evening. A new *ballet-divertissement* was produced on the occasion—one of those pieces of choreographic jewellery in which gems of dancing are prettily strung together upon the veriest thread of a plot, and "set" in a setting of gorgeous scenery, according to the fashion of a time which repu-

diated the heavy ornamentation of one of those stirring story-ballets which now began to be considered as of "the ancient time." "Les Quatre Saisons" worthily supported the *éclat* of the opening night in its own way. Strange to say, not one of the former "stars of the ballet" was present to shine on this occasion. Two new *danseuses*, whose names had hitherto been unknown to the walls of Her Majesty's Theatre, appeared in "quadrilateral" rivalry in this new *divertissement*, each having a different "season" appropriated to herself;—Mademoiselle Boschetti, sparkling in rapid movement; Mademoiselle Katrine, tall, handsome, with a broad sweeping style, perhaps rather cold and stately than graceful. Between the new aspirants for its favours and its *bouquets* the lovers of the *ballet* scarcely knew which to choose. They were too happy in having once more so dainty a banquet of dance spread out before them, to venture to be critical as to the respective merits of each *piquante* candidate for their favours.

Her Majesty's Theatre thus brilliantly launched, with colours flying, was now fully embarked upon its short but still venturesome voyage. What sunny weather, or what squalls was it yet to encounter during the few remaining brief months of the season! It sailed on pleasantly enough from the first, but without any decided augury of the future. In the "Barbiere," Madame Alboni attracted her numerous admirers;—in "La Sonnambula" also, although neither the character nor compass of the *Amina* was suited to her peculiar resources.* Signor Salviani made his *début* as

* The carpenters were enjoined to take measures for strengthening the bridge over the water-wheel—the fair representative of *Amina* being of somewhat weighty proportions.

Almaviva, and without making any such marked sensation as would raise him above, or even to the level of, the powerful rivals with whom he had to contend elsewhere, proved himself a tenor of sympathetic voice, endowed with fine powers as an actor and a prepossessing appearance. Another *divertissement*, "La Manola," gave variety to the ballet, affording Madame Bellon an opportunity for some agreeable and sprightly acting. But the important problem of permanent success was not completely solved, so far as the season of 1856 was concerned, until the appearance of a young Italian lady of high lineage on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre. Mademoiselle Piccolomini made her curtsey on Saturday, the 24th May, in Verdi's opera "La Traviata," since become so famous and (it may be said at once, in spite of all that may be stated hereafter) so great a favourite, but produced for the first time, on that occasion, on the Anglo-Italian boards. The enthusiasm she created was immense.* It spread like wildfire. Once more

* It may be fairly said, without detracting from Mdlle. Piccolomini's merits, that a certain portion of the excitement which she created on her first appearance may be attributed to the romance which signalized her operatic career. The descendant of a noble Italian family, which had given popes, cardinals, generals, and statesmen to her native country; the child of a race so often illustrated in history; living in right of her name, her title, and her family connexions, in the first Italian society of Rome and France, she had from her earliest childhood conceived irresistible longings, augmenting with years, to devote herself to the public profession of that art she felt within her, and which seemed to point out the course of her destiny. Private life grew more and more wearisome, became almost impossible to bear, as these aspirations strengthened with her advance to womanhood. So urgent was the incessant importunity of little Marietta Piccolomini, that her parents were obliged at last to yield a reluctant consent to her appearance on the operatic stage. Her youth, her vivacity, her *piquante* grace, ensured her a favourable reception, even as a novice. Her fame soon increased;

frantic crowds struggled in the lobbies of the Theatre, once more dresses were torn and hats crushed in the conflict. Once more a mania possessed the public. Marietta Piccolomini became "the rage." From the moment of her *début* the fortunes of the Theatre were secured for the season.

In what lay the charms of this new fascinator of all hearts? It would be difficult to tell: although this much is undeniable, that she exercised an almost magical power over the masses. The statistics of a "treasury" are indisputable facts. Her voice was a high and pure soprano, with all the attraction of youthfulness and freshness; not wide in range, sweet rather than powerful, and not gifted with any perfection of fluency or flexibility. Her vocalization was far from being distinguished by its correctness or excellence of school. Her acting was simple, graceful, natural, and apparently spontaneous and untutored. To musicians she appeared a clever amateur, but never a great artist.* Again, then, in what lay this wonderful power of fascination? She was not beautiful. She was *piquante*, pretty, graceful. Her figure was slender and well formed; her movements were replete with vivacity; her features were full of expression, and capable of rendering every feeling, from archness and coquettish humour to the

in Florence, Rome, and Turin, she was welcomed as the spoiled child of the public. In the "Traviata," more especially, her success was enthusiastic. On many occasions her ardent admirers would have dragged her carriage home, had not the spirited girl herself protested against such mistaken homage, or escaped by a *ruse* from so doubtful a triumph.

* A theatrical critic in Paris, where she afterwards appeared, and again with success, wrote truthfully of her—"She sings with infinite charm; but is not a *cantatrice*. She acts with talent; but is not an actress! She is a problem—an enigma!"

deepest pathos. This was much, but not sufficient to account for the mania that pervaded opera-goers like a fever. Where, then, lay the secret? It was in the indescribable "something" that bewitched all hearts. It was to be found in the expressive eyes—in the winning gesture—even in the coquettish little toss of the head. It lay in the joyous, free, ethereal essence of her whole being, and in the pathos which at times was so nigh akin to truth and superior to art. It consisted in an indefinable charm, which attracted and delighted in defiance of critical canons. It is vain, then, to attempt to define the indefinable, to attempt to describe the indescribable. Those who heard the fascinating little *prima donna* may ask of memory what it was that touched their own hearts, and find the response in themselves. A younger generation who did not know her may wonder at this all-powerful attraction of a singer who was not an artist in the strictest sense of the word, and question how it could have been. Explanation must be eschewed. They must content themselves with the answer that so it was, that so it must have been.

To resume. Mademoiselle Piccolomini appeared in the "Traviata" of Verdi. Opera and singer both were new. Curiosity and interest were excited both for the one and the other. There was an overflowing house. As during the coming season, so through her first night was the charming young lady's success unquestionable. After a warm reception, such as English audiences are wont to give by way of welcome to a meritorious stranger, Mademoiselle Piccolomini was to be heard and judged—and (what, as it turned out, was more to the

purpose) she was to be seen. Applause followed her opening efforts. The charm of manner had begun to work. The second act produced at its conclusion a burst of genuine enthusiasm. At the end of the opera it was a frenzy! The whole house rose to congratulate the singer when recalled. The charm was complete. The vivacity, the grace, the spirit, the pathos, the truthfulness of her simple and original style of acting (especially in the death-scene of the *finale*), had worked their spell. Marietta Piccolomini was adopted at once as the pet (and afterwards how *much* petted!) child of Her Majesty's Theatre.

Verdi's music now shared the same fate as its fortunate exponent. It pleased—it was run after—it became one of the most popular compositions of the time. It is true that musical "purists" cavilled and criticized severely: that anti-Verdists denounced it with all the epithets of their stereotyped vocabulary as "trashy, flimsy, meretricious." But in spite of opposition and of bigotry, it not only attracted (perhaps even more than any other of Verdi's operas) countless crowds when the favourite, "charming little Piccolomini" was its exponent, but achieved a marked and lasting popularity at other theatres as well as in every music-hall throughout the land. Notwithstanding the accusation that the "Traviata" was "weak and commonplace," the "catching" melody, and above all the dramatic force and expression of a composer whose principal merit consisted in the peculiarity that he really *was* dramatic, gained upon the masses. It attained considerable popularity, moreover, in despite of a dangerous and equivocal subject; one which was denounced from the pulpit, denounced by mighty

authority in the press, denounced even, at one time, by popular sentiment itself.*

The enthusiasm excited by Madame Piccolomini was gradually reaching fever-point when Madame Albertini made her first appearance in the "Trovatore." This lady brought from Italy a reputation of the highest rank. As the favourite pupil of the celebrated Madame Ungher—as the pet *protégée* of Rossini, who, it was

* It was notorious that the subject of the "Traviata" had been adapted from the play of Alexandre Dumas, *fils*, from "La Dame aux Camélias"—itself derived from his own eccentric and questionable novel of the same title. That the heroine was well known to be a person of damaged reputation was sufficient (although an awful punishment both of mind and body awaits her misdeeds in the story) to occasion the production to be denounced in England as highly "immoral," and to account for what followed in course of time. Permission was in vain demanded of the Lord Chamberlain to allow adaptations of the drama to appear upon the English stage. That this prohibition should have been enforced on a stage where "George Barnwell," and more especially "Jane Shore—"(the heroine of which old tragedy is also a sympathetic *Traviata*, who dies a miserable death)—are upheld as "fine old legitimate" plays, and were once produced on the chief assemblage of the youth of the age at Christmas-tide, did not appear very consistent, or even logical; and the "Traviata" appeared. And a considerable surprise (in spite of all previous minor "grumblings") fell upon the public when it found its favourite opera morally crushed to the earth by the mighty thunder of the press. The "foul and hideous horrors" of the "Traviata" were held up as proper objects for "deep and unmitigated censure" in the leading journal. One clap of thunder followed on the other. In a long letter I published an elaborate defence of my opera, against the accusation of its blatant "immorality." This letter appeared duly in the columns of the *Times* as an appendix to a still more crushing denunciation. Minor journals flashed their own smaller lightnings in sympathetic response to this storm from "the Thunderer." But the public was not to be lectured out of its treat. It *would* not consider its morality endangered. It still flocked to Verdi's opera and the fascinating Piccolomini. The only effect of the unexpected storm was to blast a striking drama which happened to be playing at the time at the Olympic Theatre, and which, being considered objectionable because vice met with no "Retribution," was included in this chance censure.

said, had laboured zealously to bestow all the advantages of his great experience on her career, she had earned for herself a well-merited fame. With a voice of great power, and many qualifications for a "first-class" dramatic singer, she had a just claim to the sympathies of the audiences of Her Majesty's Theatre. But indulgently as Madame Albertini was received on her first night, much as her great merits, both as a *cantatrice* and as a great lyrical actress, were recognised, she failed to establish any permanent success upon the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre. The secret was, her voice had lost its freshness. Although she was applauded, and seemingly successful, this fatal fact prevented her obtaining any firm footing. As Cruvelli had fled on her first season, eclipsed and blinded by the brilliant halo shed around the name of Jenny Lind, so Madame Albertini, in her turn, was perhaps unfavourably situated at this period, and could find only cold shades when all the brilliant sunlight of an audience's happiest smiles was cast upon the fortunate little "fire-fly," already in possession of their hearts.

Signor Baucardé, already favourably known on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre, and now the husband of Madame Albertini, appeared as the *Manrico* and the *Gennaro* of the operas selected for that lady's *débuts*. Improved in many respects, both as a singer and an actor, he received his share of the applause elicited on these occasions; but, like his lady, he failed in achieving any striking popularity. Indeed, in the "Trovatore" Madame Alboni may be said to have carried off the chief honours as the gipsy *Azucena*.*

* No doubt the singing of this great *contralto* was exquisite in this part. But Madame Alboni was also generally supposed to have developed

The fortunes of Her Majesty's Theatre were now once more borne along on a pleasant current. Although a small feminine hand was obviously steering the bark on its prosperous way, the gallant crew were also doing their part in aid of its progress. The charming Marie Taglioni had arrived to assist, as *première danseuse*, the four *débutantes* who had opened the pleasures of the *ballet* so successfully. To the high distinction of "*première*" she had now acquired an indisputable title. The experience of years had given her greater force and finish. Always *a* favourite, she was now *the* favoured one; and with her clever father as *maître de ballet*, and such excellent male coadjutors as Monsieur Charles and Monsieur Vanders, she delighted all lovers of the ballet.

At this juncture came to England the German celebrity already announced, to the general astonishment. Old feuds had been forgiven and well-nigh forgotten;* and when Mademoiselle Johanna Wagner appeared upon the stage of Her Majesty's Theatre a generous public eased her mind at once, and, by receiving her with acclamation, showed that it had wiped from its memory the bitter

into an actress of superior powers. The truth was, that she simply took the audience by surprise by acting somewhat better than was expected of her! "Great" her acting certainly was not. It was only good *for Alboni!*

* A few hisses, it is true, on her first night, testified that all recollection of the outrage of the past had not been wholly swept away. That these expressions of disapprobation arose from popular feeling, and not from any critical judgment of her merits as a singer was obvious enough.

Her first words to me, when I entered her room after her performance on her *début*, were, "*Quel dommage que je ne suis pas venue quatre ans plutôt.*" There was doubtless some truth in the lady's observation. Her voice had naturally lost much of that exquisite freshness which had characterized it five years previously.

rancour occasioned by her father's stupid and insolent phrase.

It was a singular scene when Mademoiselle Wagner stepped forward as the *Romeo* of Bellino's "Montecchi e Capuletti," on Saturday, the 14th June. The operatic world had felt its curiosity strained to the very highest powers of tension. Since the advent of Jenny Lind there had not existed a reputation of any celebrity respecting which so many horoscopes had been cast, and so much divination hazarded. Although still young, she already enjoyed a world-wide fame. Her achievements as a great lyrical artist had been long blazoned abroad. To the curiosity excited by the first appearance of such a prize, once seemingly within the grasp of the frequenters of the old Opera-house and yet so unauspiciously snatched from them, there was added another species of curiosity, as strong, if not in some minds stronger, to witness the reception of an artist whose delinquencies had created so great a sensation. She appeared: tall, stately, self-possessed, clothed in glittering gilded mail, with her fine fair hair flung in masses upon her neck: a superb air that seemed to give full earnest of victory, and a step revealing innate majesty and grandeur in every movement. Was it possible to gaze upon so grand an apparition, and murmur other tones than those of approbation? She sang! The sonorous voice, which heralded the mission of the young warrior to his enemies, rang through the house as penetrating and as awakening as the summons of a clarion. Was it possible to listen and not feel every hostile feeling crushed? Gifted with a voice combining the resources of *soprano* and *contralto* in one—"or rather with *two* voices" (wrote one able critic on the occasion)—a well-accented style

of declamation—endowed with a grace which made every attitude a pictorial study, no wonder that Mademoiselle Johanna Wagner "took the house by storm." The union of such striking elements of lyrical art in one and the same person seemed to have suspended all power of cooler reflection in her audience, for it commanded burst after burst of admiration and applause. The *Romeo* of Mademoiselle Wagner may thus fairly take rank among the great successes witnessed within those walls.

The evening on which Mademoiselle Wagner absorbed the powers of every ear and every eye, was marked by two other first appearances; that of Herr Reichart, a pleasant tenor, as *Tebaldo;* and Mademoiselle Jenny Bauer, a useful *soprano* of the florid school, as *Giulietta.** Both were successful. But the excitement of the evening was all for the one great luminary, which for the time bedimned all else around it.

In the next part in which she appeared Mademoiselle Wagner was not equally fortunate, although her rendering of the character of "Lucrezia Borgia" was a creditable effort.

Mademoiselle Wagner was probably correct in the judgment that urged her to propose the "Orphéé" of Glück as her second part. In that opera she felt sure of her success. She had faith now in the acceptance of the music "*quasi classique*" (as she writes), by a public which she found to be far more enlightened than she had been taught to believe it. But at this late period of the season it was impracticable to set this work on the stage.

* It was remarkable that the three principal personages of this eminently Italian opera were filled on this occasion by three German artists.

A great portion of her *prestige* was regained by her assumption of one of the grand parts of Madame Pasta, viz., "Tancredi." In this *rôle* (once conceived the greatest of all the characters in the operas of Rossini), the songstress was not compelled to contend against the partisanship of the admirers of other modern artists; and in this opera she was accordingly triumphant. Perhaps in no part could she have shone more conspicuously as an "heroic" actress, little scope as the dull drama of "Tancredi" afforded for diversity of tragic feeling and passion; and there could have been few operas, in any immediately available *répertoire*, in which all the magnificence of her peculiar voice could have been heard to greater advantage. Declamatory vigour, largeness of style and expression of sentiment, were made effective in her rendering of this part. Younger opera-goers had an opportunity of witnessing a display of vocal style and histrionic power of which, till now, they had only heard in connexion with the once great Pasta. These memories Johanna Wagner was able in some measure to revive before them; nevertheless, the opera itself, though once so popular, had but little share in the triumph of the performance,* so great had been the change in public taste.

Was this transcendent artist, however, fortunate enough to establish, as she should have done, one of those extraordinary successes which mark an epoch in

* In losing opportunities of appearing as a delineator of strong dramatic feelings, Mdlle. Wagner doubtless lost a great portion of her lawful *prestige*. As a concert-singer she never obtained any great popularity in England. At private concerts she felt the inferiority of the position awarded to her as compared with that of other artists, such as Madame Bosio for instance; and she retired of her own accord from almost every invitation to sing on such occasions.

the memory of opera-goers? It cannot be said that she did. She flashed across the arena of Her Majesty's Theatre rather as a splendid meteor than as a sun to warm, to vivify, to remain a great and permanent glory. She came, like others of her predecessors, at a time unfortunate for her fame. Marietta Piccolomini had already insinuated herself into every heart. High art, alas! paled before popular *engouement*. The performances of Mademoiselle Wagner had the honour of bringing Her Majesty the Queen to the "old house," for the first time during the season. But they never fully penetrated, as they ought to have done, the general public.

Meanwhile the witching little lady sported with her popularity like a favourite child. Her appearance in "La Figlia del Reggimento" was an enormous success with the public at large. She toyed with her part so pleasantly that, in spite of the memories of Jenny Lind and Sontag, the "*cara bambina*" was fondled more and more into popularity. She played with her music as she played with her acting. She vaulted over all its difficulties with that pretty air of triumph which so well became her. Few seemed inclined to ask, when under the charm of her seduction, whether her vocal achievements were such as the music of Donizetti demanded. The "dash," the sparkling vivacity, and buoyant spirit appeared to be irresistible; and critical ears were obliged to succumb before the enchantress. Never did *the woman* exercise a more effective influence. Calzolari and Beletti supported her in the principal characters with unusual zeal as well as histrionic excellence. Thus another *Figlia* was welcomed to the parental affection of the public in the person of Marietta Piccolomini.

Not less, in public estimation, was the triumph of the captivating enchantress in the *Norina* of "Don Pasquale." It was a part in which there were even more memories to contend with than in the *Figlia* — memories of great and surpassing *cantatrici* by the score. But what cared she for rivalry? She was the darling, the pet, the spoiled child of the public which flocked to Her Majesty's Theatre to see and applaud her. Her *acting*, more than her songs, was the topic of all tongues when Piccolomini was the theme of conversation. In the *Norina*, once more, her natural vivacity, her archness, her humour, her sportive whim, were irresistible in their powers of captivation. The influence of her fresh, girlish voice, was doubtless one of the ingredients which combined to make up the entire compound of this singular, but yet indisputable success. As a vocalist, from a strictly musical point of view, few paused to judge her. Feeling, tact, pathos, humour, took the place of "school;" and in the general delight few asked for more.

In the "Don Pasquale" she was again ably supported by Beletti and Calzolari. Signor Rossi, who had been engaged as *basso buffo* in the place of Signor Zucconi, proved himself far more efficient than his predecessor. Without any power of voice, he evinced, as an actor, a genuine breadth of humour, exempt from that perpetual strain of exaggerated gesticulations, so common to the Italian *buffo*.

With such able allies as Alboni, Wagner, and Piccolomini, I fought a new operatic campaign during the season of 1856, and came off victorious. But, in the meanwhile, the pristine glories of the *ballet* had been by no means neglected. True to the traditions of the establishment,

I produced once more a "Grand Ballet d'Action," with every appliance of gorgeous scenery and decoration. The most lavish expense was bestowed upon this production. It was to be a great trump-card towards winning in my hand. It was boldly and frankly played; but it failed to carry the day. "Le Corsaire," a *ballet* full of incident and interest (only partially founded on Lord Byron's poem), admirably constructed by Messrs. Saint George and Mazillier, and beautifully illustrated by Adolphe Adams' pretty music, had achieved a great success at the *Académie Impériale.* As the leading spirit of this short, graphic drama, Rosati had won the highest honours in Paris, both as *danseuse* and *mime.* She now came to the support of Her Majesty's Theatre, bringing with her all her talent and all her witcheries. She danced—she acted. Her ethereal bounds across the stage were once more marvels of that apparently effortless power which constituted one of her distinguishing charms. By turns sporting with a cajoling grace, which was the very poetry of coquetry, and bursting forth into melodramatic vigour when the exigencies of the stirring story demanded a more powerful display, she proved herself a pantomimist worthy of the experienced Italian *mimic,* Ronzani, who acted the *Conrad* to her *Medora.* The dancing of Rosati and of the other principals—the general choreographic *ensemble*—the gorgeous dresses—Marshall's beautiful scenery—the grouping and the *mise en scène*—all was enchanting! The manœuvres of the Corsair's vesssel in a storm; the foundering of the ship in the wild waves; and the final rescue of *Conrad* and *Medora* from the wreck, formed *the* great attractive *tableau,* which, in more modern parlance, would have been called

"the grand *sensation* scene" of this *ballet* of the "good old school." But the "Corsaire," in spite of all its splendour—in spite of all the enormous expense bestowed upon it—was not a source of remuneration to the Theatre. To say that it was a failure would be erroneous. It could not, perhaps, be called a "*demi-fiasco*;" but, as certainly it was only a demi-success. As has been so frequently explained already, the grand *ballet d'action* had now lost its power of attraction. The majority of the male supporters of the *ballet* (as a mere display of dancing) had long decided upon eschewing all pantomime. They disliked the trouble of understanding a "story," however lucidly set forth in mute action before them. They shut their eyes, and said, "We *cannot* understand it;" when the fashion of the day simply meant to say, "We *will not* understand it." They wanted only dancing, not acting, they said. They should, to tell the truth, have said, "We only want legs, not brains." And so it was that the mere *divertissement* obtained an undue position on the great choreographic stage of London.

The maligned but yet determinedly popular "Traviata" closed this "*renaissance*" season with *éclat* on Saturday, the 16th August. The "wicked opera," with its fascinating exponents had been, in spite of all that was done, said, and written, *the* great success of the season, the great magic power to coin gold into the treasury. It brought the venture, so hazardous at the commencement, to a safe and prosperous conclusion.

At the termination of a successful journey in the provinces with Mademoiselle Piccolomini, and again, after two "extra-night" performances in the month of October on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre, I departed, pass-

ing through Paris, for Italy. Embarked once more with hope and confidence on my course, I was bent on seeking "fresh fields and pastures new," and on discovering flowers unknown to English eyes wherewith to deck my theatre for another season.

In Turin I was, as usual, most kindly received by the British Minister Sir James Hudson, who had already pointed out artists of talent as available for Her Majesty's Theatre: among others Giuglini. "They belong to a new school," he wrote; "*the* new school, which is gradually rising again from the ashes of our old friends, the Tamburinis, the Rubinis, the Lablaches." The Duc de Grammont, at that time French Minister in Turin, also warmly seconded me in all my artistic views and wishes, with as much tact as kindness.

The disappearance of Lablache from the lyrical stage gives a melancholy importance to this season. There was a greatness about this genuine artist to which no parallel can be offered; and I recollect a person of distinction saying that he never thought of him without recalling to mind the Scriptural record, "There were giants in the land in those days." His style was as grand as his person was large; yet there were no subtleties too nice to escape his power of delineation. When, in early days, he played the Mad Father in the now-forgotten opera of "Agnese" (which by the way was founded on one of Mrs. Opie's novels), he varied the insanity according to the country in which he acted, representing an Italian madness at Naples, a German madness at Vienna.

His *bonhomie* was irresistible. I recollect an occasion when he had a long conversation with Jenny Lind, previous to her *début* at Her Majesty's Theatre. She appeared timid and reserved; but he dexterously turned

the discourse so as to treat of her past career and Continental success. The charm was not to be withstood. She took up the thread where Lablache had dropped it, and, while her countenance flashed with vivacity, seemed to forget everything but her own triumphs.

With the portly figure of Lablache a droll story is connected. When at Paris, he was accustomed, like Rossini and other notabilities, to choose for his promenade the part of the Boulevart des Italiens which lies between the Chausée d'Antin and the Passage de l'Opéra. One winter's day a violent shower caused him to seek refuge in the entrance of the passage, and soon afterwards a young *gamin* bethought himself of the same shelter. However, to enter a passage barricaded by a Lablache was no very easy matter, especially when the colossal *basso* had his elbows extended under an ample cloak, and swayed from one side of the passage to the other. The boy, tired of dodging the living gate, took hold of a corner of the giant's cloak, and pulling it lustily, cried, "Cordon, s'il vous plait!"—the expression in use when the concièrge is required to open a door. Lablache entered into the humour of the position, and as he let the boy pass imitated the motion of a door turning on its hinges.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Brief Notice of the "Jullien Concerts" at the Opera House, in 1856—The *Bal Masqué*—Comments of the Press thereon—Departure of the Director for Italy—Mdlle. Ortolani—Her Qualifications for the Stage set forth by Correspondents—Verdi, invited to produce a New Opera, "Imogen"—Engagement of Signor Giuglini, and Mdlle. Pocchini, the Italian "Danseuse"—The English Minister at Turin—Introduces Me to Count Cavour—Conversation with the Count on the Journey from Turin—Visits to various Cities, unproductive of Results—Dearth of Artists of Merit—Altered Character of the Opera Audiences—A wider Range of Support given by the General Public than that hitherto afforded by the Aristocratic Class—This Element less certain than the old "Subscription" as a Source of Profit—Activity of the Competition between the two Opera Establishments—Constancy of the British People to their favourite Artists—Giuglini—Anecdote concerning Him.

THE difficulties of the operatic campaign of 1856 had been very great. The necessity of commencing it without adequate time for preparation was a drawback which necessarily, more or less, affected the success of the season. Sufficient, however, had been achieved to enable me not only to meet every liability incurred with respect to the artists, but also to pay the rent due to the nobleman who had now the Cerberus-like position of patron, landlord, and creditor, all in one. Sufficient had been achieved, also, to enable me to make my preparations for the coming season on a large scale with the fairest confidence in the future.

At a late period during the previous year a combination had been entered into with Monsieur Jullien for a series of those popular "Promenade Concerts," for the direction of which the lively French conductor was at that time so famous, to be given at Her Majesty's Theatre. With a powerful band, and soloists of eminence and distinction, the performances of alternate popular and (so-called) "classical" music offered powerful elements of attraction. Through the assistance of Miss Catherine Hayes, as principal vocalist, these concerts commanded a tolerable success. With a *prima donna* placed upon a still higher pinnacle of popular favour, they would doubtless have achieved still greater results. They were terminated, in the month of December, by one of those celebrated *bals masqués*, without which, as a *grand bouquet*, none of the musical fireworks of Monsieur Jullien would have been considered complete.*

At the conclusion of the above-mentioned performances I departed, early in January, 1857, on another

* Much comment took place at the time upon the indiscretion of permitting a *bal masqué* to take place at Her Majesty's Theatre only a few months after the burning of Covent Garden on a similar occasion; and, for the first time, some ungentle remarks were made as to their moral influence. Every precaution, however, that science, care, and prudence could suggest to avoid all possibility of any disaster had been adopted. Human foresight had done all that humanity could do; and, in other respects, the powerful organ, which had chiefly used its influence against the ball being given—was the first to admit that, "it was one of the most decorous and well-conducted that we are able to remember." The crowd on the occasion was enormous; and the *coup d'œil* surpassed all previous scenes of the kind in magnificence and taste. I gave a supper to my friends and the *literati* of the day on the occasion, and subsequently presented a handsome vase to Monsieur Jullien, to stamp the success of this series of concerts.

of my continental journeys, *à la chasse des artistes*. Much had already been done in preparation for the ensuing campaign. Negociations were completed with a variety of desirable "subjects." Others were still pending. Above all, the successful *débutante* of the previous season, the "pet of the public," the great little "crowd-compeller," who had been the leading "*Deus ex machinâ*" to effect the notable change in the fortunes of Her Majesty's theatre—Marietta Piccolomini—had been secured. This little lady was evidently overjoyed at her surpassing success in London. In every letter she was lavish of her acknowledgments to "*i miei carissimi Inglesi*," and eager to return to "*la mia carissima Londra*." At one time she announced herself as "*l'ambasciadrice*" of Signor Alary, who was desirous of composing a new opera for the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre; the *libretto* to be founded on the subject of Manzoni's celebrated novel of "*I Promessi Sposi*;" and the young *prima donna* entered with all the zest of her lively temperament into these negociations. That she was not devoted solely to modern Italian music was evinced also by her desire to make her re-appearance in the *Zerlina* of "Don Giovanni."

I had also entertained the intention of re-engaging Mademoiselle Johanna Wagner as an additional attraction for the coming season. But this intention was doomed never to be fulfilled. Being very anxious to sing the *Fides* of the "Prophète," she strenuously urged on me the "mounting" of Meyerbeer's grand opera. To this intent, she recommended strongly Herr Formes (the brother of the well-known *basso*) as an admirable representative of *John of Leyden*, he having studied the part under the immediate auspices of Meyer-

beer himself. "Give the 'Prophète'" was her constant strain. "*Il vous faut absolument de grands opéras: car le répertoire Italien, malheureusement pour les entrepreneurs et les chanteurs, est devenu bien maigre.*" There is no doubt that the artist was right in her judgment. M. Paul Taglioni called my attention to Madame Csillag, who was then singing at Vienna, and whose representations he had followed, as "*une bonne artiste, excellente musicienne, douée d'un physique agréable, possédante une voix admirable d'une étendue rare;*" and he urged her engagement for the opening of the season of 1857. This *prima donna*, so great a favourite of the Viennese, was however not destined to appear at Her Majesty's Theatre.

A new "star" was looked for in Mademoiselle Ortolani, then *prima donna assoluta* of the Royal Opera at Lisbon, of whom fame spoke "trumpet-tongued." Beneventano, engaged at the time for the winter season at the same opera-house, wrote to me in raptures respecting this new singer. "*Voilà les renseignements, que j'ai à vous donner de Mademoiselle Ortolani,*" says a letter from this artist, dated from Lisbon, in the month of January, 1857. "*Elle est agée de 22 ans. Son physique est très agréable à la scène. Sa taille est celle de Madame Bosio. Sans être jolie, elle possède ce charme qui fascine aisément le public. Son œil est vif, grand, et noir—sa chevelure noire et volumineuse—son teint plutôt brun. Son caractère est doux. Elle est d'une modestie et d'une complaisance sans exemple. Sa voix est étendue, souple, mélodieuse: et sa gorge est celle d'un rossignol, ainsi que l'appellait Rubini.*" In the same letter Signor Beneventano speaks of another *chanteuse*, since well known and greatly appreciated in

London. "*Touchant Mademoiselle Parepa, avec sa voix fraîche, elle a fait une impression au commencement. Mais son inexpérience, et sa froideur naturelle, ont détruit cette heureuse impression. Son physique, à l'age de* 19 *ans, dispute l'embonpoint avec Madame Alboni.*"

To increase the *prestige* of the campaign about to be commenced, I had fostered the plan, among other designs, of attaching the popular composer, Signor Verdi, to the theatre for some months during the season, for the purpose of producing a new opera, composed expressly for Her Majesty's Theatre (if not two novelties), and of superintending the general finish of works already in the *répertoire*, such as the "Traviata" and the "Trovatore."

With these intentions, my first occupation on reaching Paris, as the first great scene of action on my continental excursion, was to seek an interview with Signor Verdi, and arrange with him the basis of the negociations by which this important plan might be carried out. I found the composer willing to enter into my views, but desirous, before final decision, of returning to his own residence in Italy in order to finish the opera on which he was then engaged, without that interruption to the sequence of his ideas which was constantly occurring in the whirl of Parisian life. I placed, however, in the musician's hands the *libretto* of a new opera, to be called "Imogen," founded on Shakspeare's play of "Cymbeline," with the subject of which Verdi appeared much pleased.*

On to Italy! In Turin no operatic engagements were

* In the course of this interview, Verdi told me that he had composed the "Trovatore" in ten days, and the first act of the "Traviata" in four

effected; but recruits were enlisted for the *ballet* forces.*

days, at Genoa, where he was detained by stress of weather, and remained *incog*. He said also that he always composed his harmonies at the same time as his melodies; or as musicians would say, composed "in score." In illustration of this seeming facility in producing results, I may quote an anecdote related by Léon Escudier, in his "Souvenirs," concerning Horace Vernet.

A wealthy Englishman once asked the great painter to contribute some little sketch, no matter of what subject, to his album, adding that he would willingly remunerate him for doing so. Vernet, accordingly, drew a head of a horse, in outline, on a blank page of the album. The delighted possessor inquired how much he had to pay. "Twenty-five guineas." "What!" exclaimed the Englishman, "twenty-five guineas for five minutes' work?" "You are under a mistake," replied Vernet; "There is ten years' work in that horse's head."

In a letter written about a month afterwards Signor Verdi accepted the proposal, on the terms offered him, to come to London for two months, about the middle of April. But he agreed only to "mount" two operas—"*composés et déjà répresentés dans d'autres théâtres*"—"Luisa Miller" and "Simon Boccanegra" being the works proposed. Any other expectations in the way of novelty Signor Verdi declined to fulfil.

* Ronzani, the Director of the *Teatro Regio* was very anxious, on this occasion, to enter upon the management also of "*La Scala*," at Milan, in case I would become his coadjutor. After some hesitation the negociation, however, did not proceed.

Nothing could exceed the kindness shown to me on this as on all occasions by my friend Sir James Hudson, the English Minister. It was during this short visit to Turin that I was introduced to the great Italian statesman Cavour, at the spontaneous solicitation of that minister. I was taken by Sir James Hudson into Cavour's box at the theatre, where I talked for some time with him. By chance, on leaving Turin, I met Count Cavour at the railway station. The statesman invited me to travel in the official carriage provided as far as our directions went together. In the course of conversation I remarked that the necessity of talking was one of the inconveniences of constitutional governments, and that, in my own little sphere, I should dislike very much to explain my views on all occasions. Cavour replied quickly, "*On ne s'explique pas, on répond seulement.*" He was then on his way to some place where he had promised to be godfather to the child of one of the government officials. On his return from his further expedition, I was frequently summoned to conferences with the statesman, from which it seemed at one time probable that important results to my own advantage might have followed.

At Milan I concluded the important engagement of the now celebrated tenor, Giuglini, then unknown in England, but whose future greatness I clearly foresaw; forwarded the negociations with the father of Mademoiselle Spezia, amidst those thousand difficulties with which a "*père d'artiste*" always environs all operatic and theatrical engagements, especially in the country where *ruse* and diplomacy are regarded as the highest virtues of the prudent and sagacious; and was struck at *La Scala* with that fascinating *danseuse*, Mademoiselle Pocchini, of whose success in London I felt in every way assured, and whom I marked for an engagement.* Mantua, Venice, Verona, were all visited and ransacked to see what operatic treasures they might contain. Everywhere notes were taken of every possibly available artist, and the merits of each weighed in that balance which can only be adjusted by ripened experience, even when held in a director's hand. February found me in Genoa, and again in Turin. In the latter city, where all smiled upon me, I naturally lingered, in the prosecution of not only my operatic negociations, but of other affairs which pressed upon the notice of the *impresario* of Her Majesty's Theatre in London whenever he appeared in Italy. There, where operatic affairs, cabals, and intrigues form so great a portion of

* I may observe that I arrived at Milan during the rejoicings which were taking place upon the declaration of the general amnesty granted by the young Emperor of Austria. The emperor and empress were received with acclamation and every demonstration of enthusiasm, in the city. The Milanese seemed all at once to have become Austrian. I was invited to a great *Ballo di Festa* given in the *Scala* Theatre to the emperor and empress by the municipality of Milan, and was much struck with the arrangements of this festive scene, and the magnificence of the *salle* with its illumination *a giorno*. The *fêtes* and illuminations of the city still continued during the whole of my stay.

the life, the thoughts, and, as it were, the "daily bread" of all men, an importance was given to the "progress" of a certain individual which, in other countries, where operatic matters are less "the be-all and the end-all" of existence, would only be assigned to the journey of a monarch.

Through Paris hastily, and I was once more in London to devote my personal care and superintendence to the preparations for the opening of my great establishment for the season of 1857. ——

The enthusiasm which had greeted the opening of Her Majesty's Theatre in the previous year had visibly not been confined to the more exclusive circles of the old opera-goers and the *beau monde;* it had evidently been shared by a far more widely extended mass of the public, gradually educated to claim a share in those refinements of social life which, not many years before, had been considered the sole property of a comparative few. The hearty interest in the performances of Italian opera at Her Majesty's Theatre evinced by the crowds which had thronged the house during the whole short season of 1856, was a sufficient proof that a pride in the *prestige* of the old theatre was felt by thousands beyond the customary subscribers and the old *habitués.* Still the times were critical for operatic speculation. The war between two rival operatic theatres was to commence once more in good earnest. The opportunity afforded by the destruction of Covent Garden in the previous year had indeed enabled me to start into new life, like a phœnix from the ashes of my rival's fire; and the appreciation which had then welcomed my efforts to soar aloft again on the wings of a company hastily improvised had given me encouragement and confidence in the future. Still I had to gird up my loins for the con-

test. The phalanx of forces I had now been able to array in battle was a brilliant one, fully capable of undertaking an even severer struggle. In some respects it was unfortunate that many of the allies I had summoned around me were comparatively unknown to British fame. As has been already remarked, a British public is of a thoroughly conservative nature. It will welcome old favourites with the old enthusiasm, even though their powers may be materially diminished, and their talent stalks along the stage a mere ghost of its own brilliant self. Unlike other countries, where curiosity and interest are heightened by the charm of novelty, and love of art is piqued by the opportunity of exercising judgment and taste, a British public is apt to look upon new candidates for its favour with suspicion and mistrust. My adversary had the advantage of exhibiting an array of operatic leaders, in many respects worn out and effete, but crowned long since with well-won laurels and, as old favourites, certain to be still not only endured but welcomed with the enthusiasm of times gone by.* The brilliant display of young, fresh, seductive, but unknown talent was thus rather a disadvantage, in the case of the Director of Her Majesty's Theatre, than an additional attraction. But conscious that I had catered judiciously, and believing that I deserved well of my generation of opera-goers, I bided my time of progressive appreciation with confidence,

* Italian artists never seem to have sufficiently appreciated the remarkable constancy of the British public. Once wedded to an artist in the bonds of favouritism, it appears to have vowed to take that spouse of favour "for better, for worse," and to be determined to close its eyes, or rather ears, to the fact that beauty of voice, power of expression, charm of talent have gradually faded and fled. It still loves on—a model of constancy. If such constancy be a virtue, it ought to receive grateful acknowledgment.

hoping that among my many brilliant coadjutors, some one or more might help me to win the victory.

The array of new promised talent was certainly as brilliant as it was unprecedented. In addition to Alboni and the chief attraction of the previous season, Marietta Piccolomini, were to appear Mademoiselle Spezia, one of the most admired of modern singers in the chief operatic theatres of Italy, as well as of St. Petersburg, Madrid, and Lisbon (heralded by an extraordinary reputation), and Mademoiselle Ortolani, of whom fame also spoke most highly; together with many other *cantatrici* of minor note. Mademoiselle Spezia, I should observe, like her predecessor, Piccolomini, was of noble birth, and had yielded to the overpowering influence of an artistic temperament in appearing on the stage. For a singer whose career had been so triumphant she was still marvellously young. One of her greatest successes, like her little rival, had been in the "Traviata." The opera had on its first representation proved a complete failure. Its composer was in despair, when LA Spezia was summoned to the rescue, and she secured for the opera a success which lasted for six-and-twenty consecutive performances.

As principal tenor stood, first, Giuglini, then rising into repute as *the* tenor of Italy *par excellence*, and the future successor to the fame of the once celebrated Rubini. To him was adjoined Signor Bottardi, a favourite tenor in the north of Italy. In their positions of the previous year were announced the ever-welcome, steady, and true artist Beletti, with Beneventano and Rossi, the *buffo* who had made a favourable impression towards the end of the season. But to these established names were added now those of Signor Corsi (whose merits, however, were rather those of an actor than a singer) and of Signor Vialetti, an excellent and accomplished *basso*, now first

recommended to English appreciation by the repute he had lately gained at Lisbon.

The promise of attraction in the *ballet* department had been enormously increased. The list of names of choreographic excellence and fame extended to a length which passed all previous limits.* In addition to Rosati and Marie Taglioni, the popular favourites, and other *danseuses* who had distinguished themselves during the previous season, were now to come Mademoiselle Pocchini, one of the most celebrated of the *ballet* stars of Italy, whose talent and charm had so much struck me on my first witnessing her performance at Milan, and Mesdemoiselles Rolla, Brunetti, Salvioni, Morlacchi, Karliski, and Pasquali—all aspirants for the first time for English honours. Equally strong were the additions to the *ballet* among the male exponents of the art. Not only were the celebrated *maîtres de danse* and *ballet*-composers Ronzani and Paul Taglioni again engaged, but to this strong force was added Monsieur Massot, the favourite arranger of the *ballets* of the Opera of Madrid; also Monsieur Petit, long known as a charming choreographic composer on the English stage. Furthermore, to second Monsieur Charles, the favourite male dancer of the day and husband of the fascinating Marie Taglioni, I had a list of male dancers and pantomimists, culled from various theatres in Italy (and all claiming the rank of principals), to the amount of half a dozen; for Italy, who had lost her supremacy of song, now outshone France

* In a letter which treats of the opening of the theatre, Lord Ward, who claimed from his position to be the constant adviser of the director, writes—"It strikes me you have an enormous *ballet*. I do not know how you will place them all."

as the nursery of dancers. The array was extraordinary: and, little as England was accustomed to receive with regard the larger and superior kind of choreographic exhibition, and grudgingly as it awarded the slightest meed of applause to male dancing, it augured at all events from such unusual preparation some display of more than ordinary power and extent of variety.

CHAPTER XXV.

Ample "Bill of Fare" provided for the Season of 1857—Cordial Approval of the Same by the Subscribers—Opening Night—Brilliant *Début* of Signor Giuglini—His Reception Flattering—Mdlle. Spezia—Pocchini—The *Ballet;* eclipsed by the Lyric Artist's Success—*Rentrée* of Piccolomini—Warmly welcomed by Audience—Ortolani—Her Merits described—Predominant Attraction of Piccolomini—Mad. Alboni—Her Vocal Perfection—Signor Corsi's *Début*—The Opera of "Don Giovanni" produced with strong Cast—Its Attraction—New Work brought out for Rosati, "Mario Spada"—Vexatious Incidents in reference to the Claims of inferior *Danseuses* to prominent Positions—Arrival of Marie Taglioni—Close of the Season—Extra Performances—The Marchesa Piccolomini's interference in Mdlle. Piccolomini's Affairs—Good Feeling displayed by the Latter towards the Management—Giuglini True and Loyal also—Solid Success of the Operatic Season, Discouraging Circumstances notwithstanding—The Winter Operas.

THE great trumpet-blast of warfare had been blown in the extensive prospectus of the Direction. The note was brilliant and clear, and sufficient to startle the public out of any possible apathy. The spectators of the coming fight were to be the paymasters of the war expenses. How would they respond to the powerful *réveillée?* That was shortly to be seen. The campaign of 1857 began on the field of Her Majesty's Theatre on Tuesday, the 14th of April.

It was natural to suppose that the extraordinary

scene of enthusiasm which marked the opening of the "old house" in the previous season, after years of sad dreariness, could not with any possibility be once more displayed, seeing that the tumult of extraordinary operatic congratulation had long since subsided. A slight reaction might have been indeed expected. But this was far from being the case. The second "resuscitation season" was inaugurated with demonstrations of fervour and delight perhaps even surpassing the popular expressions of joy in 1856. The restoration of the long absent, and (as was thought) deposed ruler, was then to be celebrated; but now again crowds seemed to flock around him with every evidence of "loyalty and love," as if to assure him that the public desired nothing better than a firm and permanent establishment of the dynasty.

If prosperity could be augured from the appearance of the house on the opening night of 1857, that of the season seemed ensured. It was altogether a most brilliant affair. The theatre was crowded, whilst the whole entertainment called forth unequivocal marks of satisfaction. The director was enthusiastically summoned to receive the congratulations of his audience. The principal vocalists were all recalled. In short, the good augury was stamped by every possible manifestation of success.

"La Favorita" had been selected for the introduction of three new aspirants for favour on the Anglo-Italian boards. It savours of want of gallantry to give precedence of record to the success of the principal male vocalist, who appeared on this occasion. But there is no doubt that he was the principal object upon whom interest and curiosity were fixed. It was he, in truth,

who produced the greatest effect on that evening. Fame had blown her trumpet so loudly over the head of Signor Giuglini, the new tenor; rumour had accompanied the blast with so many variations in the shape of illustrative anecdotes respecting his career, that operatic minds had been "screwed up" very high. Was he to be again one of those vocalists, who had been painted in such colossal proportions in the columns of French, Spanish, or German newspapers, but who had appeared such comparative pigmies when placed before eyes unaided by the magnifying glasses of an ardent imagination? A London audience was to judge. Signor Giuglini sang his opening air. There was no need to wait for judgment. The verdict was given on the spot. The singer was received on the strength of that one air into that temple of favour in which he has ever since stood undisturbed upon his pedestal. With a voice of peculiar lusciousness, which could only be reproached with its over-honied sweetness, and possibly the singer's tendency to prolong its notes even to the danger of cloying the ear; with a command of power, as well as delicacy of feeling; with a faultless intonation, and a chest voice which scorned the use of *falsetto*; no wonder that Signor Giuglini quickly penetrated the hearts of his audience. Doubts might be raised against his right to be considered a dramatic artist. But he possessed in an unusual degree that quality which an English audience looks to as the first and almost only requisite for a favourite tenor—a quality which leads them to overlook deficiencies of dramatic talent—namely, a lovely voice. With this one quality, and that one of extraordinary charm, no wonder that Signor Giuglini carried all before him. His audience was fairly entranced,

and only awoke from the spell to overwhelm him with applause.

I may here take occasion to remark, that as Baucardé had been summoned from the kitchen to become a *primo tenore*, so had Giuglini been ravished from the clutches of the priesthood. He began his professional career in the choir of the metropolitan church of Fermo, and was destined, it is said, for an ecclesiastical career. His excellence, first as a treble, and afterwards as a tenor, attracted general notice, and soon every temptation was offered to induce him to appear upon the lyrical stage. He firmly resisted, till accident effected what persuasion could not accomplish. A member of the orchestra of the Fermo Theatre happening to fall ill, Signor Giuglini took his place at a moment's notice, and shortly afterwards rose from the band to the boards in consequence of the sudden illness of the principal tenor. His success as *Jacopo*, in "I Due Foscari," at once lifted him above the chance of rivalry in the eyes of the Fermo public, and after a series of brilliant successes at various theatres, he achieved at Milan his last great triumph prior to his London engagement. The Emperor of Austria was so highly gratified by his performances in the Lombard capital, that he not only nominated him chamber-singer of his court, but was desirous to secure his services at the Viennese Opera. Unfortunately for the public of Vienna, I had already engaged Signor Giuglini for three years; but still the court was determined that the Austrian capital should not entirely lose so bright an ornament, and accordingly Signor Giuglini was at once secured in advance for the year 1860.

The history of Signor Giuglini's success in London,

since he opened the season at Her Majesty's Theatre, on the 14th of April, 1857, is but the record of a constant progress in the acquisition of public favour. So often has the stamp of Italy proved without value to the inhabitants of Western Europe; that the genuine triumphs achieved there by Signor Giuglini would have been utterly worthless in securing the favour of the London *connoisseurs*, had not the correctness of report at once been demonstrated by the real merits of the artist. The very night of his *début* at once established him as the chief tenor of the day, and that in the eyes of the most fastidious and aristocratic audience that could be assembled within the walls of a theatre. Everyone hung entranced on the impassioned tones of that faultless organ, scarcely knowing whether most to admire the bounty of nature, or the proficiency in art. The inhabitants of every European metropolis must be aware of the high importance attached to the appearance of a new tenor in the lyrical horizon. Whatever may be the talent of the bass or the baritone vocalist, he still lacks that fascinating organ that can assemble multitudes at will, and bid them listen to the magic of his utterance. Among male artists the tenor alone commands a broad popularity, and when we say that Signor Giuglini was at once acknowledged as a tenor unsurpassed, if not unrivalled, since the days of Rubini, we say that he at once took the highest position attainable by vocal talent.

The mention of Rubini's name in connection with his own, doubtless, prompted Signor Giuglini to follow closely in the track of that once idolized artist. *Arturo*, in "I Puritani," and *Edgardo*, in "Lucia di Lammer-

moor," were the great parts in which the departed tenor had gained undying laurels, and in these Signor Giuglini was, as it were, bound to appear, and to challenge the verdict of the British public. The verdict was given in bursts of applause at the end of each successive display, and those who at first had confined their admiration to the vocalist were now surprised at the excellence of the actor. It should be added that the perfection of Signor Giuglini's execution was based on a thorough knowledge of music, extending even to the art of composition.

The triumph of the new tenor was the event that, above all others, distinguished the London Musical Season of 1857, during which, "Have you heard Giuglini?" and "What do you think of Giuglini?" were the questions commonly asked in every fashionable assembly. Notwithstanding the quantity of musical talent that is brought every season to London as to a common centre, every other male vocalist appeared to be utterly eclipsed by the new phenomenon, and each fresh character in which he was announced was anticipated with the utmost eagerness. The English public, as I have already remarked, is not easily excited: on the contrary, it is somewhat inclined to regard with suspicion every newly-imported talent; but the exquisite quality of Signor Giuglini's voice, the perfection of his execution, and the truth of his expression, constituted an attractive force not to be resisted.

Mademoiselle Spezia, the *Leonora* of the night, achieved also a success, but it was subordinate to that of the fascinating tenor. Her grace, her pleasing voice, her evidence of intelligence and dramatic feeling,

all won their due meed of applause. Excessive nervous agitation on the opening night in some degree marred her powers. But if she was not allowed, like her compeer, to spring at once upon a pedestal from which she was to be displaced no more by popular award, she was accepted ungrudgingly as a *prima donna* who might maintain a position worthy of a leading *cantatrice*. Signor Vialetti completed the trio of new aspirants, and as a steady, earnest, musician-like, and artistic *basso profundo*, stamped himself at once a valuable acquisition to any great lyrical *corps*.

So great was the excitement created by the operatic interest of the evening, that the overwrought audience could find but little fire of enthusiasm left within them for the *ballet*, although Mademoiselle Pocchini came with a great reputation, and was unquestionably one of the most charming and fascinating *danseuses* of the day. Her choreographic and mimic powers were both such as to ensure a *succès d'enthousiasme*. But human nature has its limits of excitement, and but little attention was accorded to the "Esmeralda" [which had been considerably curtailed], in which she danced and acted; being supported moreover by the wondrous successor and extraordinary "double" of Monsieur Perrot, the pantomimist, Monsieur Massot, whose likeness to his predecessor was so extraordinary that many took him for Perrot himself. Poor Pocchini was greatly displeased with her reception afterwards, but was calm in her manner to me.

No less an event, in the estimation of the frequenters of Her Majesty's Theatre, was the reappearance of Mademoiselle Piccolomini. After "La Favorita" came

the "favourite"—the favourite of the public—the pet, spoiled child. No welcome could be more enthusiastic as the sparkling little lady stepped once more upon the boards as the "Figlia del Reggimento." A house crowded with all that was fashionable, literary, and artistic in London, seemed to offer in chorus from their very hearts a "Happy welcome back" to their darling. As an operatic artist she could scarcely be said to have improved. Few paused to speak of her singing critically: her acting was almost exclusively the theme of laudation. She was beloved; that was to be quite sufficient; and woe betide those who ventured to judge her otherwise than as "our special pet," much less judge her severely. Was she not there again, with her sprightly *naïveté*, her pretty audacity, her *verve*, her natural feeling, her powers of fascination—in other words, with all that indescribable charm, with that indefinable "*je ne sais quoi*" which gave her a power over all hearts. She was accepted once more as the pet of the season, and the audience were in transports of delight.

Signor Bottardi, who had come with a fair repute, appeared as the *Tonio*. Must the verdict on the occasion be noted? "The less said the better!"

But the expectations raised relative to Mademoiselle Piccolomini's performances were only moderately satisfied by her appearance in Donizetti's charming little comic opera. It was useless disguising the fact, but it was in the "Traviata" that the public most desired to see the favourite of last season, and the "Traviata" they would have. Preached against, talked against, written against by the most powerful pens of the day, the "Traviata" nevertheless kept the field triumphantly.

Still more than before was the "Traviata" "the rage."*

So Mademoiselle Piccolomini reappeared in the "Traviata," and the announcement of this opera attracted one of the most over-crowded audiences of the season. She sang, she acted again with her old spirit, her old feeling. The witchery of the above-quoted "*je ne sais quoi*" was flung over her audiences as before; and, under the influence of her spell, the enthusiasm rose as high as ever. Signor Giuglini, as *Alfredo*, reached an even higher pitch of favour than on the night of his *début*. With such united attractions as the little *prima donna* and the "sympathetic" new tenor, with audiences filling the walls of Her Majesty's Theatre, the "Traviata" and Piccolomini were destined to rule supreme throughout the season.

In the "Puritani," selected for the *début* of Mademoiselle Ortolani (whose appearance, long announced, was looked forward to with considerable interest), Signor Giuglini was again fated to wrest the palm of merit from the hands of the lady. More and more

* No greater proof of this extraordinary *engouement* can be found than in the fact that the "Traviata" was given as the most powerful attraction of the day, in a concert form, at Exeter Hall, the great asylum of sacred music, the resort for amusement of those from whom the very name of a theatre calls forth the heartiest "Anathema Maranatha!" the very temple of Puritanical zeal! An excellent "skit" upon this performance, by the late Mr. Albert Smith, was privately circulated at the time. Some of the lines ran thus—

"The chance won't come again to us, the world's regenerators,
To hear improper music, and not in the vile theayters.
Oh! is it not a blessed thing, that chosen ones, like us,
Can hear it at our sainted hall, without improper fuss?
The *Times* condemned its playhouse form; but bless our happy land,
Which makes sin in the Haymarket religion in the Strand."

applauded at each new representation, and firmly established as one of the popular favourites of the day, he even surpassed all his previous efforts as the *Arturo* of the night. His shortcomings as an actor, his seeming awkwardness of manner, and his somewhat ungraceful gait, were overlooked and even forgotten, in the presence of the feeling, fervour, and dramatic expression of his singing. Nervous and trembling, Mademoiselle Ortolani had but little chance of sharing the honours of the evening with the favourite tenor, although she was an admirable vocalist of (what was still at that time called) the "Persiani school." In the management of her voice, not a powerful one, she displayed a mastery which concealed physical deficiencies, together with a certain grace and facility of vocalization, which, however, tended occasionally to exuberance. Tall, striking in personal appearance, and agreeable in manner, she had many requisites for commanding attention and sympathy. On subsequent evenings, when Mademoiselle Ortolani had shaken off the nervousness of her *début*, she obtained higher favour with the frequenters of Her Majesty's Theatre, so that she was always seen and heard with satisfaction. Her industry was great, and she was certainly a singer entitled to achieve eminence, if eminence could be obtained by sheer study. The zeal she displayed later in the season in studying the part of *Elvira*, in "Don Giovanni," showed the disposition of a true artist.

Thus, among the *prime donne* of the season, "the pet" remained still "the pet" to the end. Mademoiselle Piccolomini was decidedly and incontestably *the* attraction of the year 1857. Never was a more striking

proof of this unabated favouritism given than on her first appearance in the "Lucia di Lammermoor," before a house crowded to an unusual extent. Every new part in which "the pet" was announced to appear was sure to excite the liveliest interest. It is useless to seek reasons to account for this wonderful popularity of the "little lady." Her popularity must be received as an "accomplished fact," and remain unscrutinized, as it was unquestioned. Her *Lucia* was a triumphant success: the enthusiasm of the public was roused to fever pitch; the demonstrations showered down on her in plaudits and cheers as well as *bouquets* rivalled those of the great Lind *furore* of years now gone by. In a musical point of view her most ardent admirers could scarcely deny that her singing was far from being "up to the mark;" or at least, that it left much to be desired. But defective as her execution may have been, there was an undeniable charm of expression, feeling, and passion in every phrase she warbled that lulled her hearers into a contented forgetfulness of what she was not, and carried them away spell-bound into an admiring appreciation of what she was. "Call" responded to "call;" *bouquets* flew across the house in quick succession; and at the end "the darling pet" was again summoned back long after she had left the scene, and was conducted on to the stage to receive a parting recognition from her admirers (blushing and laughing in *naïf* embarrassment) in her private dress. Signor Giuglini, too, on this occasion mounted still higher in popular esteem by his *Edgardo*. About *his* singing there could be no possible difference of opinion. Since the days of Rubini such a remarkable combination of lovely voice with "school" and expres-

sion had not been known. The famous "*maledizione*" [which had sufficed to make the fortune of a *tenore robusto* like Fraschini], being delivered with profound emotion, took the audience by storm. It was with his voice, in fine, that Giuglini stamped himself a superior artist, and became one of *the* great tenors of operatic fame in Europe.

As it has been already stated that Mademoiselle Piccolomini remained during the rest of the season the greatest and most remunerative "card," it may be as well at once to give a brief *résumé* of the new parts in which she exercised this extraordinary influence. As the *Zerlina* of "Don Giovanni" she fully maintained (she could not increase) her hold over the hearts of the thousands and tens of thousands of Londoners. In the *Adina* of the "Elisir," where her vocal powers were perhaps more severely tried than in any previous opera, she again earned that triumph which her peculiar gifts always seem to have assured to her. In the final *duo* of Donizetti's "Martyri," first given as a *hors d'œuvre* on the ambitious little lady's benefit, and frequently repeated during the remaining season as well as in various "extra performances," she again fascinated her audience. And so Marietta Piccolomini reigned as undisputed queen to the close of the season of 1857.*

Under the circumstances of the general worship of

* It was during this season that arrangements were made for the transfer of Mademoiselle Piccolomini's services to the United States; and it may be here noted, that her success in America was as great as that which had attended her career both in her own country and in England. After many negociations she set sail for New York, under the conduct of an American director, as arranger and manager of the speculation.

the little idol of the day, it can be no wonder that other goddesses of song should have felt aggrieved that such slight homage was comparatively paid at their altars, and that almost all the incense was burned before one alone. No wonder, for instance, that Mademoiselle Spezia, clever and sensible young woman as she was, felt herself well-nigh (what is called in professional terms) "shelved." Other engagements also had to be fulfilled. Mademoiselle Alboni had to make her welcome re-appearance; and she in her turn was greeted by a discriminating audience as the *Rosina* of the "Barbiere," although offering, in her own peculiar perfections, a signal contrast with the "pet" of the hour—it might be *because* she did so. As a highly elaborate example of pure Italian singing, Alboni's style stood high in public estimation. Nay, more, she was perhaps *unique*. On the other hand, the heavy quietude of her manner forbade fascination, leaving the vocal faculty to work its effect unaided. How different from the attraction offered by the *spirituel* qualities which enabled Piccolomini to call down the plaudits of the house!

Meanwhile, the claims of such a *prima donna assoluta* as Mademoiselle Spezia were not to be overlooked. She reappeared in the "Trovatore" (an opera which was year by year gaining upon the sympathies of English audiences), having as yet only been able to obtain a favourable hearing in the "Favorita." In her new character she made a still bolder stride to place herself on a high pedestal of reputation. Her dramatic expression and her occasional bursts of "vocal eloquence" called down testimonies of appreciation from the entire house. But again, there was the great object of attraction, Signor Giuglini, by her side, seizing as his right

the lion's share of interest—carrying off the loudest plaudits—forming the theme of every tongue. Much curiosity was excited also by the *Azucena* of Madame Alboni, a meritorious performance; in a musical sense, an admirable one.

In "Nino" ("Nabucco") Mademoiselle Spezia made a decided advance in public estimation. She was universally admitted to be a genuine artist; her dramatic energy was acknowledged. Nevertheless, the title of "favourite" was not to be won. Indeed, the object of interest in the "Nino" was Signor Corsi, who made his *début* on the occasion. This celebrated singer had acquired so high a reputation in Italy as the legitimate successor to Georgio Ronconi, in the execution of lyrical parts of great *dramatic* power, that the liveliest curiosity was excited by his first appearance. The correctness of his vocalization, the management of his not very powerful voice, and his great intelligence, were duly acknowledged; Signor Corsi was received at once as a well-trained and conscientious singer, and as an acquisition to a company already overflowing with excellence. But his far-established fame as an actor was not fully recognised here. Was it that in England we had been accustomed to more powerful delineations? Be this as it may, although accepted as a singer of ability, Signor Corsi failed to establish his claim to public favour by any great histrionic ability.

One of the most marked events of the season came as an illustration of the adage that, in excellence, "the old is ever new." "Don Giovanni" was given with all the advantages of "cast" which a strong company could furnish. Under almost all circumstances, the *chef-d'œuvre* of Mozart may be played as a good card by any

management in London with the assurance of "winning," at least for two or three nights. But on this occasion, not only had every available artist of note been judiciously selected for each part—not only had the services of all the principals not otherwise engaged (with the single exception of Madame Alboni), and of every second singer of ability, been enlisted in the good work, and unusual strength added to the choruses—not only had many pieces of music, generally omitted hitherto, been rigorously restored—but the assistance of an able dramatist was obtained to remodel the "business" of the scene, and render the action of the drama more comprehensible, and better "motived" than had been generally the case; new and splendid scenery had also been painted for this important revival. Under these auspices "Don Giovanni" commanded not only its due and customary tribute of success, but achieved once more a triumph which caused its performances to be reckoned among the important features of the season. Perhaps of all the accomplished artists employed in the rendering of this great opera it was still the "pet," Mademoiselle Piccolomini, who carried off the fairest laurels in *Zerlina*. Once more the charming actress "held her own" among the eminent singers around her. Mademoiselle Spezia as the *Donna Anna* showed herself both vocally and dramatically a superior artist. Her tragic declamatory powers, joined to her superb appearance, could not but meet their just appreciation. The music of *Elvira* was creditably sung by Mademoiselle Ortolani. Strange as was the music of Mozart to the Italian *cantatrice*, its execution manifested the careful study and earnest zeal of the true artist. But the "pet" carried all before her. Beneventano worked earnestly, if not

satisfactorily, as the *Don*. Beletti showed himself, of course, as an admirable artist in *Leporello*. The music of *Don Ottavio* was warbled by the beautiful voice of Giuglini as few had heard it warbled before.* The fine deep bass of Vialetti resounded effectively as the *Commendatore;* and Corsi sensibly contributed to the general *ensemble* of this great cast by his acting and singing in the minor part of *Masetto*. In the ballroom scene the principal executants of the *ballet* department were also made available in the dances and groupings.

"Don Giovanni" had been intended from the first to be produced as one of the great "cards" of the season; and never had a trump been more successfully played. "Don Giovanni," with such unwonted attractions, "drew" enormously for several nights. Again and again was the grand chorus, "La Libertà," encored amidst the loudest acclamations. Again and again was each artist greeted with the most hearty enthusiasm. Thus was the mighty influence of the grandest of operas made to testify to the undying genius of Mozart. It is scarcely possible that any new opera, whatever its distinction, could have equalled the attraction which the old *chef-d'œuvre* now widely exercised in virtue of its complete, well-suited equipment.

Perhaps, under the circumstances forced by the current of events upon the management, Mademoiselle Ortolani had the most reason to complain of the want of due opportunities for the exhibition of her artistic acquirements. She sang only once again in the last act of "Il Pirata," for the benefit of Signor Giuglini. But she could scarcely feel dissatisfied when even so

* The noble air "Dalla sua Pace" was restored by Giuglini on this occasion, and he made a marked sensation by his tender, expressive delivery of it.

powerful a rival as Mademoiselle Alboni could scarcely elbow her way through the crowd of artists to obtain a position before the "footlights." This latter lady, however, in a performance of "La Sonnambula," afforded an occasion for the production of another new tenor as her *Elvino*. Signor Bélart had this opportunity of making a good first impression. This Spanish singer was an excellent artist, with a voice, which, though not powerful, was of pleasing quality, and an unexceptionable style, combined with true dramatic feeling. It was impossible for him to be otherwise than favourably received by any audience of real intelligence. But wide as the arena of an opera stage may appear, the space on it is limited for distinction. Giuglini was just then the tenor "in possession," who strode, unshaken and unshakeable, from wing to wing, permitting no other to figure by his side. Where was poor meritorious little Signor Bélart to plant his foot? He balanced himself for a night or two, then tottered, and shortly afterwards disappeared for the season.

On the supplemental nights, given at reduced prices, Signor Giuglini having departed for other engagements Signor Bélart was left sole possessor of the parts of "*primo tenore*," and acquitted himself to general satisfaction.

It must not be supposed, however, that during these operatic varieties the other branch of the establishment had been neglected. Dance had been allowed to hold her place by the side of her charming sister, Music. Indeed, so far from any neglect being shown to the *ballet*, more than usual exertions had been made during the season of 1857 to invest it with splendour and power of attraction. The celebrated

Spanish *danseuse*, Madame Perea Nena, then in the zenith of her powers and her celebrity, appeared in the exercise of all her fascinations in a new, semi-mythological, semi-romantic *ballet*, called "Acalista." The greatest pains had been bestowed upon this production —exquisite scenery, dresses "rich and rare," and the highest efforts of art in the choreographic arrangements. The *piquante* Spaniard pleased; and "Acalista" worked its way to the profit of the theatre, as well as to the credit of Monsieur Massot, its composer. A new *divertissement*, called "Les Roses," danced by some of the many principal "ladies," diversified pleasantly the longer evenings of song. But the great *pièce de résistance* in the *ballet* department came in the form of one of those grand pantomimic displays which still lingered on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre. "Marco Spada," a *grand ballet*, founded on subjects in Scribe's opera of the same name, and familiar in its story to London play-goers from a similar drama admirably played and "got up" at the Princess's Theatre, introduced the favourite Rosati on her reappearance on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre. This production, in which the charming *danseuse* had won "golden opinions" at the *Académie Impériale* in Paris, was necessarily curtailed to court the languid suffrages of London loungers. Perhaps even in its diminished glories it was yet "a world too long," although a more striking, interesting, and better-executed work of the kind had never been placed before the frequenters of Her Majesty's Theatre. Rich in appointments, gorgeous in scenery, and commanding a choice *corps de ballet* with the fascinating Rosati at its head, it ought to have commanded a far more brilliant *succès d'argent* than fell

to its lot. If applause and showered *bouquets* could have been converted into gold, Mademoiselle Rosati, in "Marco Spada," would have proved another *Danaë*.* The *ballet* arrangements were completed at the eleventh hour by the welcome return of one of the great favourites of the day—Mademoiselle Marie Taglioni, with the popular dancer, Monsieur Charles. Their detention at Berlin by order of the Prussian court, for some festivities of the hour, had occasioned serious disappointment, for I had hoped to have produced this *ballet* early in the year.

The operatic performances with Madame Alboni, Mesdemoiselles Piccolomini, Spezia, and Ortolani, comprised the revival of "Le Nozze di Figaro," with the three latter ladies. The popularity of these representations gave occasion to their being resumed for a brief period of time in the month of September.

* The preparation of "Marco Spada" afforded a striking illustration of the difficulties with which a manager has, on many sides, to contend. Mademoiselle Katrine, an aspiring *danseuse*, had been taken into especial favour and protection (artistically speaking) by an influential nobleman. Notes and letters were showered continually upon me, urging preferences to be shown to Mademoiselle Katrine in this *pas* or in that, "here, there, and everywhere." The lady had been favoured with a special *divertissement*, and was allowed to dance the "Aurore." On the arrival of Mademoiselle Rosati and the production of the new *ballet*, however, an anticipated storm burst over the management. His lordship demanded an especial position for Mademoiselle Katrine in "Marco Spada." The *Prima Ballerina Assoluta* contested stoutly the young lady's right to any such exceptional standing. I was anxious to conciliate the conflicting interests, but worked in vain. Fortunately the nobleman arrived in town just previously to the production of the *ballet*, threw his weight into the scale of favouritism, and thus took the responsibility of decision on himself. The "*Assoluta*" was compelled to succumb, and Mademoiselle Katrine received the honours of a *pas de deux* in each separate *tableau*.

Although a winter campaign was commenced late in the month of December (an innovation and experiment about which more will be said hereafter), the series of operatic performances at Her Majesty's Theatre may be considered to have thus terminated. The principal successes of the season had been unquestionably due to Mademoiselle Piccolomini and Signor Giuglini: both had worked zealously and unremittingly to secure the fortunes of the theatre. The spirit and ardour of the "pet" never for one moment flagged. Yet she must have had much with which to contend, both within and without the walls of the theatre. The Countess Piccolomini, her mother, although born in a higher sphere, was, in all her connexion with the stage, the veritable type of the "*mère d'artiste*." Now she discouraged her sprightly and buoyant daughter by constant grumblings, predicting that every new part she undertook would be a "*fiasco*." Now she harassed the management with complaints that her daughter was being worn to death by her exertions and over-fatigue. "Are you really so much fatigued?" I once asked the "pet," in sympathy. "Well! they tell me I am," answered the young lady, with a joyous and ringing laugh. These perpetual lamentations were only to be met by pleasantry. "Of course your daughter must be completely worn out," would be the playful answer; "she is getting so miserably thin" (she was as plump as a little partridge); "she is actually bent double" (she was bounding about the stage like a young fawn). "She sang the *Traviata* last night better than ever; whereas, when she first came, she sang with effort, forcing her voice. Of course, all that must be accounted for by excessive fatigue." But Marietta was never happy except when she found her-

self upon the stage. "I have a hard task between you," I said to her, good-humouredly; "your mother complains that I make you sing too much, and you that I make you sing too little."

As for Giuglini, he showed himself to the last full of zeal and energy.*

The theatre was closed; and a portion of the artists had started on that provincial series of entertainments which, for some years past, had formed an essential portion of operatic speculation. The end of the season had been gained with much success, and without any serious drawback from disastrous accident. When it is considered how much, in all theatrical affairs, the most important contingencies hang upon the slenderest threads, there was in negative success alone strong reason for congratulation. The brilliant series of representations given had fully maintained the position of the theatre. The credit of the vast establishment, in which Lord Ward and I were now jointly interested, had been not only confirmed but increased. Every liability had been met, but the management had had, nevertheless, to contend with more than ordinary obstacles. The year had been one of extraordinary commercial panic; and even the so-called "gaieties" of the London season had been overshadowed by the pre-

* At this period the principal passion of the great tenor was for making and letting off fireworks! It was one of those passions which almost amounted to a mania, and engrossed all his thoughts when not occupied with his art. He had come to be a considerable adept in fire-work-making, and his enthusiasm in exhibiting his beautiful works, and his pride in success and applause apparently equalled that which he felt in the pursuit of his musical career. A pantomimic expression of "a Catherine wheel," from a friend in a side-box, would make him sing on the stage with redoubled spirit.

vailing gloom. Much as the reputation of the theatre had been re-established, it was still necessary to look to future seasons to place the establishment on a wholly solid basis. The long-cherished project of an "association" to this effect was still in abeyance; and although every preparation for duly launching the scheme had been made, all progress was impeded by the long-protracted course of the appeal in the House of Lords, in the suit of which mention has so frequently been made. It was impossible to undertake plans relative to a property the title to which, although not, perhaps, in serious danger, was still in dispute. In such a juncture, it was indispensable for me to come to a more favourable position with my present landlord and creditor, Lord Ward. The rebuilding of Covent Garden, to be opened the next season with all the attractive *prestige* of novelty, threatened a rivalry even more formidable than before. Propositions made by me to my noble creditor, although hampered with the condition that they should be made dependent on the issue of the litigation in the House of Lords, were acceded to as being not only reasonable but just. These arrangements once completed, I was able to look forward with some security to my next campaign, the preparations for which were imminent. Armed by Lord Ward's assurances of constant good-will and interest in my fortunes, and convinced that there was no reasonable doubt of the ultimate success of the pending suit, I again took breath with confidence and hope.

The autumn tour of the artists, which had generally proved so highly remunerative to the finances of the establishment, resulted, on account of the damp thrown upon all enterprise by the commercial panic of the day, in a heavy loss to the treasury. Nor was the expedi-

tion taken, upon leaving the English provinces, to Holland and the north of Germany more successful. On the Continent also the general depression consequent upon the state of affairs was most cruelly injurious to all artistic speculation, and the company returned to England.

More successful were the concerts given at Her Majesty's Theatre, under the conduct of Monsieur Jullien, during the late autumn months. These highly popular entertainments were heightened by the engagement of Mademoiselle Jetty Treffz, one of the most favourite ballad-singers of her time, whose pleasant style and sprightliness were always sure to attract. A due share of the success of these concerts must, however, be awarded to their clever and eccentric conductor. Monsieur Jullien's faith in his own genius was in itself a warrant for confident expectations. In his own eyes his productions were as the "music of the spheres," and to impress himself on the public as a genius beyond mortality was thus a comparatively easy task. This self-confidence, joined to considerable ability and great spirit, made Monsieur Jullien one of the musical heroes of his time. In many respects, also, his concerts were fully entitled to their powers of attraction. He had the tact to combine sterling and "legitimate" music by the greatest masters, with his own sparkling and catching but noisy and "flashy" compositions. Of his love of noise I recollect a singular instance. The French drummers were rehearsed for his new Indian Quadrille. The effect was deafening. "I can't hear you!" he shouted. They must have been heard miles off! Their efforts were redoubled. "I can't hear you *now!*" he shouted again. Their beat was like thunder.

On they went more loudly. "I can't hear you *yet!*" he shouted a third time. No amount of noise could, on certain occasions, satisfy the impatient *maëstro*.

A new experiment was also made before the close of the year, by the opening of Her Majesty's Theatre for a winter series of "extra performances" at reduced prices; and, thanks to the music-loving spirit which had for many years possessed the hearts of the general public, to the exclusion of mere exclusiveness, the experiment achieved a result which went even beyond anticipations. "Students of black-letter law," wrote one humorous pen on the occasion, "who recollect those eccentric tenures by virtue of which the occupant of an estate was bound to provide his liege lord with a rose in December and a snowball in July, might naturally place the presentation of an opera-box in the Christmas week on the list of rents impossible to be paid." Yet the seeming impossibility was made a pleasant reality. The demand for places in all parts of the theatre for every night was almost unprecedented; and when the "Trovatore," with Giuglini and Mademoiselle Spezia, was presented to the public on Tuesday, the 29th December, the crowd was not only immense, but most enthusiastic in its appreciation of the artists. On this occasion Signor Aldighieri, the new barytone, secured himself a favourable position in public esteem. Was not the "pet" there also to fascinate the throngs which *would* flock to the naughty "Traviata," with all the more seeming *gusto* because the fruit they coveted was said to be forbidden? and did not she insist on drawing crowds also in her *Lucia*, with such powerful aid as Giuglini? and, what was a still more attractive experiment, was not Balfe's ever-popular opera "The Bohemian Girl"

presented in an Italian form as "La Zingara," to give her the opportunity of appearing in one of the favourite characters of the most popular opera of a genuine English public? Prosperous as was the experiment of a winter season generally, perhaps the greatest success attended this last venture.

During this period also, a series of "Festival Performances" were given at Her Majesty's Theatre, in honour of the wedding of Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal with the Crown Prince of Prussia. All the principal English theatres in London contributed their best in pieces and in actors, on the various nights, to the entertainment of the Court and its Royal guests. For its own share Her Majesty's Theatre offered "La Sonnambula," with Mademoiselle Piccolomini (for the first time in that character), Giuglini, and Beletti.

Through difficulties and impending dangers the fortunes of the theatre thus rolled on, seeming to gather strength from success and popularity. There may be much "seeming," however, among the hidden arcana of even the most patent truth.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Director's Visit to Vienna, in view of the Season of 1858—Engagement of Mdlle. Tietjens for Her Majesty's Theatre—Prince Metternich—His Kindness towards me—His Love of Music—Harassing Uncertainties as to the Result of the Appeal to the House of Lords—Sudden Change in the Conduct of Lord Ward—His Peremptory Demands of Payment of Rent—I give up my last Rights over the Property to Appease my Creditor—Opening Night of the Season, April 13th—Giuglini and Tietjens in the "Huguenots"—A Brilliant Success—The "Trovatore," with Tietjens and Alboni—Piccolomini still commands the Favour of the Public—"La Serva Padrona" brought out for Her—Borne down by successive Reverses, I resolve on Retiring from my Arduous and now Dependent Position—Possession of the Theatre given up to Lord Ward's Agent, 1858—Consolation afforded me by the Retrospect of my Career and the Attachment of my Friends.

CONFIDING in the arrangements agreed upon between me and my noble landlord, I was employed early in the year of 1858, in seeking to strengthen my already powerful company; and towards the close of February I started, *viâ* Paris, on my road to the Austrian capital. Even when I had been advised by a friend to conclude an engagement with Madame Csillag, then singing at Vienna, I had another prize in view, to be won from the Austrian capital, upon the acquisition of which I placed the highest value. In Mademoiselle Tietjens, a singer of the operatic stage of Vienna, I saw the chances of a greater success. Already during my artistic excursion of the previous year I had heard

and appreciated Mademoiselle Tietjens; but her engagement at that period with the direction of the "Kärnther Thor" Theatre seemed to preclude all immediate hope of obtaining this attractive *cantatrice* for Her Majesty's Theatre.

Circumstances however, connected with the management and fortunes of the Imperial Opera at Vienna, had again raised my hopes of attaining this object during a portion at least of the season of 1858. Negociations had been successfully opened by the intermediation of a friend in Vienna, a man of great ability; and early in the year 1858 the necessary arrangements were nearly completed. Much secresy had been observed in the affair. Not only was precaution rendered necessary by the actual circumstances of the "Kärnther Thor" Theatre at Vienna, but, as the agency of the rival London establishment would have been actively at work to lure away the attractive singer to the Italian Opera at Covent Garden, "mystery and discretion," as well as activity, were essential elements in the negociation. In fact, the affair did not become what the Germans call a "public secret" until the engagement was signed by both parties.

At Vienna, during my journey in the spring of 1858, I was enabled to assure myself that in all probability my hopes of a great success in London with my new acquisition would be realized. I heard Mademoiselle Tietjens sing once more, with newly-added advantages, and was delighted. Roger, the celebrated French tenor, sang with her, and showed himself, as indeed he had always been, a consummate actor. But his voice was nearly gone, and, by the side of the then fresh and powerful organ of Tietjens, appeared feeble. All the applause was for the favourite; and I felt that in com-

pleting the engagement of Mademoiselle Tietjens, I had probably secured to myself another hold upon my English supporters. My Vienna visit appeared an augury of good fortune.

While in Vienna I was fortunate enough to renew the acquaintance and obtain the friendly regard of the celebrated Prince Metternich, who was lavish in his attentions. The old statesman had a passion for music, and said of himself that his musical organization was so delicate that he could detect the slightest wrong note in the fullest orchestra. He had frequently borne a part in concerted music himself, and was even competent to "conduct." The musical education in Germany in his early days was such that a respectable orchestra could easily be *improvisé*, he said, in any country house; and in some of the *châteaux* in the neighbourhood of Vienna he had known of parties which had devoted eighteen out of twenty-four hours to musical practice. Music, he declared, in all the difficult moments of his career, had been his constant solace. In this, as in other respects, he reminded me of Count Nesselrode, who had said that the love he cherished for music and flowers had constituted the chief sustaining force of his latter days.

Prince Metternich had seen much of Rossini in past years, and had refreshed the composer's invention by communicating to him various German national melodies. At the Congress of Verona (he narrated), Rossini, who was then composing his "Semiramide," would come and play portions of his latest themes to a select party of the statesmen there assembled. "I feel still young," the aged diplomatist said, "at eighty-six. But the defect in my hearing is now a sad drawback to me, particularly as, in listening to music, certain notes now always strike me as false."

On leaving Vienna I received the following characteristic letter from the venerable Prince, dated, by a singular coincidence, on the very day on which, some years before, he had been obliged to quit Vienna:—

"*Le* 13 *Mars*, 1858.

"*Je vous remercie, mon cher Lumley, de votre attention de me faire prévenir de votre départ. J'eusse été charmé de vous voir encore chez-moi, et c'est avec peine que j'y rénonce. Si vous passez par Dresde, tachez de trouver un moment pour aller voir mon fils.** *J'espère vous revoir une autre fois. Vû mon age, je vous conseille toûtefois de ne pas trop en retarder l'occasion. Recevez mes hommages.*

"METTERNICH."

Two other kind friends, who made my sojourn in Vienna most agreeable, were Prince Esterhazy (whose hospitable hotel was always open to me), and the brilliant and beautiful Countess Potoska (*née* Sapieha).

After a successful tour, brightened by the pleasantest hopes, I was once more in London to superintend the preparations for the opening of my important campaign. Important in itself, important for the future, was this campaign in every way destined to be. Although harassed by the uncertain state of my affairs with Lord Ward, and naturally anxious as to the success of a season which included the prospect of a revived rivalry with the New Opera-house in Covent Garden, it was with undiminished energy that I once more set myself to my task of organization.

The season did not begin this year until after Easter, and thus, much more than usual depended upon the result of the opening night. To this important "first

* Now Ambassador to the Court of the Tuileries.

night," therefore, my attention was peculiarly directed. The production of the "Huguenots," with the new and much-anticipated *prima donna* and the successful tenor of the previous year, Giuglini, was an event upon which the whole reputation of the theatre for the ensuing season, and the consequent fortunes of the establishment, might possibly depend. Every nerve, then, was strained to make this production as effective as possible; every effect that could be commanded by scenery, dresses, and general appointments had been studied and executed with the minutest care; every artist engaged seemed to feel how much depended on this all-important first night, and each rivalled each in zeal. Even the last rehearsals became events of interest and excitement; and the curiosity of the privileged few who could obtain admission on these special occasions was stretched to the highest pitch. To none were fame and fortune more at stake than to Mademoiselle Tietjens. How much she felt this critical position was evidenced by her bursts of artistic animation and excitement at the rehearsals. As her powerful voice rang through the theatre, and excited the plaudits of all present, so the latent fire of Giuglini became kindled in its turn, and, one artist vieing with the other in power and passion of musical declamation, each rehearsal became a brilliant performance.* None appeared for one moment to doubt of the great success of the new *prima donna*.

* Indeed, so strongly were both artists and *connoisseurs* impressed with the merits of Mademoiselle Tietjens, that fears were expressed lest she should utterly "swamp" the favourite tenor. "He will never be able to come up to that powerful voice in the last act," said one. "She will utterly double up Giuglini," cried another. I foresaw that their fears were idle, and the result proved I was right, for by his personation of *Raoul* Giuglini raised himself to the pinnacle of his profession.

The sun of fortune seemed thus to smile with pleasant augury upon the future destinies of the theatre; but unfortunately, the proverb "All is not gold that glitters" was fated to be true in this instance. Placid though the surface was, doubt, anxiety, distrust, and trouble were beneath it. These could not be seen, or known, or even surmised by the mere gazers upon the outer side of things, which continued to present a bright aspect. In order to explain the actual position of the establishment however; it will be necessary to revert, as briefly as may be, to the complicated tangle of legal affairs which enveloped the management at this period, and to indicate the painful circumstances which were converging unseen towards the sombre *dénouement* of this history.

All the prudent calculations which I had made for the final settlement of affairs, by the formation of the proposed association (so often mentioned), had been fatally disturbed by the unexpected amount of delay in the delivery of the judgment in that protracted suit before the House of Lords—a delay which prevented, also, the fulfilment of the conditional understanding last entered into with my noble creditor. The judgment was eventually given on the 19th April (a few days after the opening of the theatre), and was altogether favourable to my interests. But in the meanwhile, although for some time past no doubt had been entertained of the favourable result of the decision in the House of Lords, and everything was in forward progress for the execution of the plan which was to conciliate all interests, the nobleman in whose hands I had placed myself with thorough confidence, had suddenly, and without any apparent reason, changed his character—passing from

the well-wisher and the forbearing friend to the harsh and exacting creditor. At the very moment when all my previous difficulties seemed to be about to melt away, I was informed by Lord Ward's solicitor that three quarters' rent (one quarter in advance) were due to his lordship, and that if these were not immediately paid, I must be prepared to give up possession of the theatre into his lordship's hands. Failing these conditions, legal proceedings, he said, would be at once resorted to. The arrangement last made between the parties—viz., that the payment of a year's rent should be postponed—was thus all at once ignored. Lord Ward's advisers seemed, by a sudden turn of opinion, to consider that the spirit of the previous understanding was not a matter for consideration, inasmuch as it could not be made to bear the character of an engagement to be enforced by law.

My momentary inability to meet the demand for the amount of three quarters' rent in arrear, or in prospect, was to be regarded as equivalent to the cancelment of all past understandings; and the option given by the noble creditor, in the face of prior pledges was, immediately to pay the sum of 4000*l*., or abandon all interest in the theatre which was once my own. And at this crisis, promises, assurances, offers of assistance, and goodwill, had all "vanished into thin air." The creditor who had, not long before, repudiated the intention of exacting his "pound of flesh," now demanded that "pound" with the sharpest rigour of the law.

In this painful position—unexpectedly forced upon me — painful beyond the mere financial pressure — I looked around for means of satisfying my all-powerful creditor, in order to avert the complete surrender of all prospective interest in the house wherein

not only my fortunes, but all the affections and ambitions of long years were "garnered up." "All rather than this" was my natural feeling. But the situation was hard and perplexing. Thus it fell out that, bright and hopeful as all looked before the world at the opening of Her Majesty's Theatre for 1858, the actual prospects of the management were fraught with uneasy forebodings, but too justly entertained.

For the present matters must be left in this entanglement. Operatic events press on. It is only necessary to bear in mind that, under the circumstances of the opening of the new house in Covent Garden as a fresh powerful rival to Her Majesty's Theatre, and considering that in Lord Ward's hands hung the destinies of both, no human foresight could have anticipated that he would be so blind to his own interests (to say nothing of those of his tenant), as obstinately to refuse the smallest concession: such concession, if made, being calculated to ensure the triumph of his own speculation.

The opening night of the operatic season of 1858 arrived. On Tuesday, the 13th April, Her Majesty's Theatre was once more crowded to its utmost limits. The Queen and Court were present on this occasion, an event somewhat unusual for an opening night. Everything wore an aspect of unusual brilliancy. A frequenter of the theatre might have seen at a glance that a far more than customary importance was attached by all to this first night of a season. It was, in truth, a "first night" of extraordinary interest: a great trial night. The opera given was the "Huguenots," for the first time produced at Her Majesty's Theatre; and Mademoiselle Tietjens, the great German soprano,

with whose fame operatic rumour had so long been busy, was to sing the part of *Valentine;* Signor Giuglini also was to appear as *Raoul,* and even he, although he had been received with so much enthusiasm, seemed to be placed once more upon his trial, so important was the *rôle* of *Raoul de Nangis.* Scarcely ever had there been a night of more significance to the fortunes of Her Majesty's Theatre: we shall find that few were ever more fully triumphant in their results.

Giuglini was in ecstasies when I told him, on the stage, that the Queen was to be present. Both he and Tietjens were very nervous; nevertheless, the opera went off well, and the success of Tietjens and Giuglini was complete. I attended the Queen on her leaving her box, and she said to me, "It was beautiful." After the many absurd reports, and the manner in which the Queen's name had been used, the visit was of great importance. She came again on the Thursday night, and waited to the end.

On a subsequent performance of the "Huguenots," Prince Albert, on leaving, asked me why the old man (meaning *Marcel*) wore a scarf on his arm in the last act. "Because he is wounded," I replied. "But the white scarf is the sign of the Catholic party," he rejoined, "and such a bandage creates confusion." I thanked his Royal Highness for his criticism, which certainly was a very just one.

The reception of Mademoiselle Tietjens was enthusiastic. Her splendid voice, her broad and impassioned style of acting, and her fine dramatic declamation, all delighted her audience. Giuglini was set upon "his mettle," and exerted himself to the utmost, singing his best, and fully maintaining his footing by the side of the

Valentine. Beletti, Vialetti, Aldighieri, and other excellent artists, were employed to effect an excellent *ensemble* of this mighty opera. Mademoiselle Ortolani warbled with pleasing facility the music of the *Queen of Navarre*, and proved a useful addition to an excellent "cast." This lady, although she never attained to a very high position in England, was greatly esteemed on the Continent, and came to London overwhelmed with the honours she had received at the Italian Opera at Barcelona. In every department extraordinary zeal was exerted to do full justice to this truly imposing work. Scenery, dresses, all the appointments were brilliant. As a spectacular production alone the opera deserved the highest admiration. Every detail had been studied to the highest perfection. The attempt to place a work of the German *maëstro* upon the Anglo-Italian boards, and secure it a place in the *répertoire* along with the Italian lyrical dramas,—so long in all but exclusive possession of the stage—was in itself hazardous. But in making this attempt in accordance with the spirit of the times, the management not only made a bold step but achieved success. The opera of the "Huguenots" maintained its position and its powers of attraction for many nights on the stage of Her Majesty's Theatre; and with it was maintained also the fame of the striking *prima donna* who now first began to assert that supremacy which during many following years she continued to enjoy. The difficulties with which managers have often to contend were again exemplified by the declaration of Mademoiselle Tietjens, that she was so unwell as to render it impossible for her to sing on the Saturday. On being informed, however, that Mademoiselle Spezia would take her part of

Valentine, the lady was induced to reconsider her decision. Although enjoined *on no account to sing* if her performance was likely to injure her, she now insisted on her right. She sang in spite of the alleged impossibility.

But where was now the "pet?" Mademoiselle Piccolomini made her reappearance, as soon as the increasing vogue of the "Huguenots" permitted her return before her "*carissimi Inglesi*," in her lively and animated impersonation of *Norina* in "Don Pasquale." She appeared, acted, and sang too, after her own peculiar bewitching fashion, and was received by her old public with a welcome which seemed to say, "We have adopted you as our own especial pet; and we do not mean to desert you in behalf of another favourite."

On the other hand, the popularity of Mademoiselle Tietjens was steadily on the increase. Her appearance as *Leonora* in the "Trovatore," was another triumph. Critically speaking, the florid music of the Italian school may have been less suited to the declamatory dramatic style of the German artist than that of *Valentine*. But criticism, in this instance, was overborne by enthusiasm. On the announcement of Mademoiselle Tietjens in a new part the house was crowded to excess. The Queen and all the Court were present, and the whole performance was rendered tenfold more effective by the feverish and excited state of the masses assembled on the occasion. The general enthusiasm knew no bounds. Everything was applauded: Alboni, who made her *début* for the season, received the due welcome of a tried and richly-deserving favourite. Giuglini once more carried off his share of the honours, but not the least luminous of the "stars" was the new *prima donna*.

No wonder, then, that under the circumstances other distinguished *cantatrici* looked on, and beheld this rival absorb universal attention with undisguised mortification. No wonder that intrigues were discovered within the walls of the theatre, having for their object to reinstate Mademoiselle Spezia in the position of which she had been altogether deprived by Queen Tietjens. During the previous season this excellent singer had made good her pretensions to a high rank as *prima donna*. If she had not altogether won it, she had displayed sufficient power to warrant her in trying a fresh effort. The "pet" now fluttered uneasily, flying restlessly from branch to branch of her *répertoire*, and finding no more a safe perch whence to pour forth her song to the delight of the thousands who whilome had flocked to hear her. Some good chances, which she richly deserved if only in gratitude for all the former services she had rendered to the establishment, were still in store for her, however. How they availed her in the fight remains to be told. It can scarcely be said that any chances arrived for the less fortunate Mademoiselle Spezia, who had only the opportunity of singing once more during the season in the "Nino" of Verdi.

It must not be supposed that during all this attraction, in a more immediately operatic sense, the *ballet* had been altogether neglected. The management had certainly learned by experience that the times, when striking pantomimic dramas, as arenas for choreographic action as well as dancing, and as vehicles for the gorgeous marvels of the scene-painter and the machinist, afforded remunerative returns for the lavish expense bestowed on them, had long since gone by. But, by a necessity of ancient reputation, the Direction of Her Majesty's Theatre always felt itself called upon to

maintain the old *prestige* of the *ballet* as an indispensable part and portion of the attractions of the house. Thus, in the earlier season, Mademoiselle Pocchini, vigorous, agile, and graceful, who had been received into great favour in the previous year, led the band of admirable *danseuses* — and their name was "legion!"—in two new productions. Neither "Calista, ou le Renvoi de l'Amour" nor "Fleur des Champs" merited much more than the title of *divertissement*, although bearing the pretentious appellation of *ballet*. In the latter, it is true, might be found a sort of thread of mythological and allegorical story, and it was exquisitely put upon the stage. But the palmy days of the *ballet*, properly so called, were no more. The distaste prevalent among fashionable dawdlers had become all-powerful. This diminished taste for the old style of *ballet* with a story did not prevent Mademoiselle Pocchini, however, from maintaining in "La Fleur des Champs" the great reputation she had already acquired.

As the choreographic department of the establishment was certainly far from supporting its former character during a season signalized rather by operatic triumphs, it may be well to state summarily that two of the most favourite *danseuses* of the time, Rosati and Marie Taglioni, came, danced each in her own special *divertissement*, won their customary tribute of applause, and gathered their customary heaps of bouquets, yet without materially adding to the lustre of the season.

It has been mentioned that Mademoiselle Piccolomini was fortunate enough to avail herself of "chances," such as did not fall to the lot of other ladies of the establish-

ment. The revival of "Don Giovanni," with a completeness scarcely inferior to that of the previous year, enabled her to display all her winning witcheries as *Zerlina;* and a pretty, arch, coquettish little *Zerlina* she made, though no longer the exclusive theme of all tongues as heretofore. The *Donna Anna* of Mademoiselle Tietjens, whose increasing popularity lifted her into the part (sung the previous year by Mademoiselle Spezia), commanded particular attention. Thus, also, in the "Nozze di Figaro," Mademoiselle Spezia was again superseded by the new *prima donna* whom all opera-frequenters now desired to hear. The *Countess* of the German lady absorbed all admiration and remark. In this latter opera Mademoiselle Ortolani seemed borne down and utterly lost as *Cherubino.*

On the other hand, the "little lady" strove hard for the supremacy. In "La Zingara" (the "Bohemian Girl" of Balfe), she employed all her charms to win back truant hearts, supported by Madame Alboni as the *Gipsy Queen.* Again did she make a bold shot at fickle admirers in Paesiello's little operetta of "La Serva Padrona." Here all her fascinations had full play; and this her last new part was one of the most striking, as it was one of the best of her performances. But although charming little Marietta Piccolomini still occupied a fair share of public favour, she could not but feel that many a courtier was leaving her "levees" to crowd around the throne of another.

It has been said that one especial chance was offered to Mademoiselle Piccolomini to shine with renewed lustre. She was destined to be the heroine of the only opera entirely new to the London stage which was produced during the season. On Tuesday, the 8th June,

was given for the first time on the Anglo-Italian boards Verdi's opera of "Luisa Miller;" and both Mademoiselle Piccolomini and Madame Alboni were included in the "cast." Of this work some Italian critics had been accustomed to speak as the *chef-d'œuvre* of their favourite composer.

But the production of "Luisa Miller" did not greatly benefit the management. The "little lady" displayed all her attractive qualities as an actress, and as an actress reaped her harvest of applause. But by general accord, on the part of Verdi-ites as well as anti-Verdi-ites, the opera was declared to be the weakest of his many productions. It was considered to be wanting in melody —a charge seldom brought against Signor Verdi. There were no particular salient points to be looked forward to as the *grands bouquets* of Signor Verdi's musical fireworks, as is the case in most of his other operas. The *libretto* also, founded upon Schiller's early tragedy of "Kabale und Liebe," a subject, it might be thought, highly favourable to lyrical working out, had lost so much of its true dramatic metal in passing through the crucible of the Italian *poëta*, that it had come out a mass of unattractive and unsightly ore. Passages of interest and passion could not be altogether wanting with a subject in which the dramatic instincts of the composer could not be utterly silent; but the true element, both musically and dramatically speaking, was evidently absent, at least to English minds. Signor Giuglini sang the one pleasing *romanza* to the delight of a crowded audience; and Alboni poured forth her mellifluous notes in an interpolated *cavatina;* but "Luisa Miller" failed to win the suffrages of the frequenters of Her Majesty's Theatre. It lingered, hoping for success "against

hope," on the boards of Her Majesty's Theatre for a very few nights, and then fled them to return no more.

In the meanwhile, the new *prima donna* had been marching forward from one success to another. The *Lucrezia Borgia* of Mademoiselle Tietjens was allowed to be the finest of all her characters. It "took the house by storm;" and there was no one to question the fact that England had won a great artist. In a short time she had fairly established herself in the favour of the frequenters of the Opera.*

With every apparent prospect of the most satisfactory results, the regular season rolled on to its close. To this a series of "cheap nights," the success of which on former occasions had fully warranted their renewal, succeeded: affording to Mademoiselle Piccolomini her final triumphs, uncontested by a rival, previous to her departure for her American expedition. At last the curtain fell, and terminated the protracted season of 1858. It fell: and but few persons were aware at the

* That a spirit of rivality and jealousy should have existed between the favourite of the present and the favourite of the future may easily be imagined. But, strange to say, this spirit was exhibited more strongly on the part of the rising than of the setting star. The triumphant *prima donna* seems to have found subject of complaint in the amount of *bouquets* flung to the "little lady," as far exceeding her own, and likewise in the fact that a distinguished *habitué*, who always applauded "the pet," bestowed but a scanty amount of approval on herself. The increasing requirements of the successful *cantatrice* were also a subject of much annoyance to the management; so much so, that Mademoiselle Spezia was required to be in readiness to take her place, should her exacting conditions be such as to lead to a rupture. The ingratitude of some artists is astounding. When her success was still doubtful, the lady was all meekness, and full of fears lest she should not be re-engaged. Now that it had surpassed her most sanguine expectations, the tone adopted towards the direction was entirely changed.

time, that it had fallen upon the last performance destined to be directed by the hand and mind of Benjamin Lumley. Few indeed knew that my connexion with Her Majesty's Theatre had been already cruelly severed. Certainly none anticipated that I was no more to be the ruling spirit of that vast establishment. What, then, was the actual position of affairs?

The opening of the new Italian Opera-house in Covent Garden unquestionably offered formidable obstacles to the temporary prosperity of Her Majesty's Theatre; but I still entertained the impression that, if certain effective measures were taken, and the establishment could be "kept going" for the next two years, the rival house must at last necessarily succumb. Lord Ward, in whose hands now lay, for good or for evil, the determination of the destinies of the "old house," seemed at this critical period to have felt the whole force of this calculation.

Under this view, it was well-nigh impossible for me to imagine that, for a comparatively trifling question of three quarters' rent (scarcely exceeding the sum of 4000*l.*), Lord Ward could put upon me that harsh and stringent pressure which must necessarily cause great injury to the theatre and to his own interests. It was calculated to inflict a deadly blow on the "time-honoured" establishment, and to drive the man for whom he had professed so much friendship and interest to the verge of ruin. Moreover, by refusing further time for the payment of arrears by not extending the term of the lease, or making any reduction in the rent, the opportunity was lost for carrying out the project of an association, for which in fact, since the

(then recent) alterations in the laws of partnership, the capital was provided. Such a scheme, if carried out, would have enabled the theatre to flourish as in the best days of its prosperity. But these expectations were not destined to be realized. In the face of previous promises Lord Ward left me no alternative between the immediate payment of the arrears of rent, or an immediate cession of the whole property into his own hands; and the peremptory demand for the balance of rent was accompanied too, with the equally peremptory refusal to make the concessions alluded to.

It has already been stated that, under this pressure, I looked around for means of softening my all-powerful and inexorable creditor. Since the resumption of the performances at Her Majesty's Theatre, more than 5000*l.* had been expended by me on those general appointments of scenic representations, technically called "properties." Although all previous "properties" had been assigned to Lord Ward, these at least were *bonâ fide* my own. Still the assignment of them was required. This point also I conceded in the hope of conciliating my powerful creditor; and an agreement was signed by me to this effect. But the sacrifice was made in vain, and was of no greater avail than "the offering of a heathen devotee to an implacable deity." On the very same day that the receipt of the agreement was acknowledged, it was notified to me that a writ was issued against me for the fatal "arrears of rent." Nothing remained, therefore, but a surrender of the lease and, along with this, of the possession of the theatre into the noble but now exacting creditor's hands. The debtor was thus successively laid under obligation, and then stripped bare; no alternative being

open to me excepting that between "payment" and surrender, to the last rag of "properties," lease and all. That it was legally in the power of my landlord to enforce both these conditions, I afterwards learned to my cost. But, strong in my own opinion at the time, I submitted to the surrender of the lease. Possession of the premises was formally given up, and my connexion with the theatre was brought to an end. On Tuesday, the 10th of August, the establishment passed wholly into the hands of Lord Ward.*

Supported by the esteem and regard of many highly-placed and influential friends both in this country and on the continent, I was enabled to support this heavy and unexpected blow of fortune with courage and calm resignation. The cares of management were not wholly removed from my shoulders, certainly, since I had for some time to provide for the distinguished

* I find a remarkable note of these circumstances in my diary: "I had seen B——" (Lord Ward's solicitor) "on the Friday previously, at his request; and he seemed somewhat surprised and disappointed at my readiness to give up possession of the opera, and appeared to wish some arrangement could be brought about by which I could continue—urged me to see Lord Ward again—said that he would do so, &c. &c. But Lord Ward had gone to Scotland, to be out of the way (as he said himself) when possession was given up. It is difficult to account for all that has passed; indeed, no ordinary reasoning can explain it. I have been actuated by nothing but good feeling, and have endeavoured to do my utmost, as I thought, to realize his wishes. Indeed, I have acted towards him as I would have wished (had our relative positions been reversed) that he should have acted towards me. I have paid every artist to the last shilling, and kept up the *prestige* of the theatre, and its consequent value. I had a right, therefore, to calculate on something beyond a mere rigid commercial feeling on his part. The sudden change in him is without any apparent reason or motive. At least, it is impossible for me to fathom them. I can but think he must have been played upon by some enemy. However, time alone can clear up the obscurity which darkens all this."

artists whose engagements were still upon my hands.* Eventful, and fraught with considerable interest, was still the existence that for some time lay before me after the severance of my career from the fortunes of Her Majesty's Theatre. But with that severance must terminate the history of my management, with all its trials, all its glories, all its vicissitudes, and all its many triumphs.

That management had comprised, perhaps, the most brilliant period of the history of Italian Opera in the British Isles; and thus, even under the poignant disappointments which led to my final resignation of the direction of Her Majesty's Theatre, I was sustained by the absence of all self-reproach in retracing the memory of the past, as well as by the consciousness of the great things I had been able to achieve as director of the first theatre in the kingdom—may it not be added the first in Europe?†

* When, in after years, I readily consented to allow my artists to give their valuable services to the Turin Opera, it was the earnest wish of the king and his minister, the lamented Count Cavour, that the opening of the first Italian Parliament should be accompanied by the mounting of a well-appointed opera, instead of the inferior one which had been on foot in previous years. In January, 1861, but a few months before his death, this eminent statesman thus addressed a letter to me: "*Je vous assure que je considère cet acte comme une preuve de la sympathie que, comme tout Anglais généreux, vous avez toujours professée pour la Cause d'Italie.*"

† Among many other distinguished artists, I had the pride of reflecting that I had produced for the first time in England upon my boards, Madame Sontag (after her long retirement), Jenny Lind, Tadolini, Frezzolini, Sophie Cruvelli, Parodi, Moltini, Castellan, Caroline Duprez, Barbieri-Nini, Spezia, Ortolani, Johanna Wagner, De la Grange, Albertini, Piccolomini, and Tietjens. Again, Gardoni, Moriani, Calzolari, Baucardé, Fraschini, Guasco, Ronconi, Beletti, Fornasari, Staudigl, De Bassini, Aldighièri, Coletti, Beneventano, Bélart, and Giuglini. Nor must Arditi be forgotten, than whom, taking

all qualities into account, a more able "conductor" never reigned in this country. Among dancers, Rosati, Cerito, Ferraris, Lucille Grahn, Marie Taglioni, Adèle Dumilâtre, Guy Stephan, Pocchini, Monti, the *danseuses Viennoises*, and the great Taglioni (on her return); besides Perrot, St. Léon, Paul Taglioni, Massot, and a host of minor stars of great brilliancy, belonging to both sexes—founding, by my exertions, a new school of dancing, both in London and Paris. In operas, I had produced for the first time the "Don Carlos" of Costa, the "Tempesta" of Halévy, the "Masnadieri" of Verdi, the "Florinda" of Thalberg (all composed expressly for the theatre), "La Figlia del Reggimento," "Ernani," "I Due Foscari," "Attila," "I Lombardi," "Nabucco," "Roberto il Diavolo" (in Italian), "La Zingara" (in Italian), "Il Prodigo," "Gustavus" (in Italian), "Zampa," "Don Pasquale," "Linda," "La Favorita," "Roberto Devereux," "Maria di Rohan," "La Traviata," "Luisa Miller," "Il Trovatore," "La Serva Padrona," "L'Ajo nel Embarazzo," "Le Tre Nozze," "Le Cantatrici Villane," "La Corbeille d'Oranges," "Cosi fan'Tutte," "Corrado d'Altamura," and "Belisario;" besides other novelties, too many for enumeration, and standard old operas, a host in themselves. The catalogue of the new *ballets* would lead us much too far. But "Alma," "Esmeralda," "Eoline," "Catarina," "Ondine," "Lalla Rookh," "Electra," may be remembered; to say nothing of the famous "Pas de Quatre," "Le Jugement de Paris," and "Les Éléments."

THE END.

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